



**THE  
ROLE AND POSITION  
OF WOMEN  
IN  
ROMAN NORTH AFRICAN  
SOCIETY**



by

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I declare that THE ROLE AND POSITION OF WOMEN IN ROMAN NORTH AFRICAN SOCIETY is my own work and that all the sources used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

De Marre

(M.E.A. De Marre)

20 November 2002

## SUMMARY

In this thesis I have endeavoured to throw light on both the private and public aspect of the lives of women living in the Roman African provinces from the first century BC to the seventh century AD. Funerary inscriptions reveal that the role of women in private life was projected in a manner which reflected the ideals for Roman womanhood (*pudicitia*, *castitas*, *fides* and *fecunditas*), even when they clearly came of Afro-Punic stock. In terms of the quality of their lives Roman African women of the propertied status groups (about whom we know the most) had a good standard of living compared to other parts of the Roman Empire, and for example were well-educated in the urbanized areas compared to provinces such as Gaul. Roman African women of the élite also enjoyed a degree of autonomy enhanced by the increased financial independence granted to them in terms of Roman law, which enabled them to function as benefactors in their communities in the same way as their male counterparts, donating money for temples, baths and markets. In return for this they were duly recognized in honorary inscriptions by their communities. Although this public role may appear to be in conflict with the 'ideal' domestic or private role of the Roman matron, this activity was sanctioned by the fact that they were acting in the interests of male family members who were engaged in municipal careers. In the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> centuries there are a few signs that women were beginning to act more in their own interests, but much of their public role faded with the increasing dominance of the Christian Church which prescribed a more limited role for women. The only exceptions occurred in the times of persecution through the temporary prominence gained by women as martyrs and confessors, although this prominence cannot be said to have advantaged women in general. During the Vandal and Byzantine period we know of only a few women, primarily those with connections to the élite at Rome and Constantinople, who acted with the independence and authority of their class.

## KEY TERMS

All key terms are linked to 'Roman Africa'

- |                        |                               |
|------------------------|-------------------------------|
| • Women                | • Women and age               |
| • Roman Africa         | • Female professions          |
| • Vandal rule          | • Female autonomy             |
| • Byzantine Africa     | • Female wealth               |
| • Female education     | • <i>Liberalitas</i> by women |
| • Ideal role for women | • Priestesses                 |
| • Female purity        | • Martyrs and confessors      |





FIGURE 1. *LA ELEGANTE SUSCETTIBILE*  
STATUE OF A ROMAN WOMAN FROM LEPICIS MAGNA, EARLY 3<sup>RD</sup> CENTURY AD

ἄριστα δ' ὁ Ῥωμαίων δοκεῖ νόμος  
ἔχειν, ὥσπερ ἀνδράσι καὶ γυναιξὶ  
δημοσίᾳ μετὰ τὴν τελευτὴν τοὺς  
προσέκοντας ἀποδιδούς ἐπαίνους.

*Best of all seems the Roman custom,  
which publicly renders to women, as  
to men, a fitting commemoration  
after the end of their life ....*

[Plutarch, *Gynaikon Aretai*]



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## PREFACE<sup>1</sup>

In the field of Ancient History the greater body of Classical scholarship has tended to follow the patriarchal lines of the sources, examining those things which through the ages have been given value by the ancient authors, who were inevitably representatives of a value-system in which male activities such as politics and war were regarded as of exclusive interest to writer and audience, whereas the activities of women, such as the bearing and rearing of children, were forgotten unless they impinged on these values. Since the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, however, history has been perceived as a much broader canvas in the conviction that it is not only the historical events themselves which form the past and are worthy of study, but also the development of the *mentalité* of society - indeed the whole spectrum of society - out of which events arise. From this more anthropological and sociological perspective, gender relations - the culturally and socially developed differences between male and female as opposed to purely biological differentiation - are taken to influence events and are an integral part of the discourse on social values and functions.

The relatively recent social and political liberation of women has of course also had an influence on the writing of women's history, but this thesis is not a feminist study as such, although many female authors of women's history claim that it is not possible to write *sine ira et studio* and that any study of women is inherently political or 'engaged'. I hope to be able to show in this study that an exploration which has women as its focus is not necessarily one in which the author has to take a moral stand regarding the position of women in antiquity. The purpose here is not to point out the inequalities between men and women in order to promote a contemporary 'rebalancing' of the situation, since it can be argued that women were not entirely victims but participants in the creation of gender roles and divisions: 'If women are a force in history, if they make their own history, then we must also face the possibility that females have participated in creating and reproducing the less-sanguine aspects of the gender system' (Ryan 1983: 167). In modern times an example can be seen in the mass protests of women in some Muslim countries against giving the right to vote to women. Since there is no evidence in antiquity that the majority of Roman women wanted any other role than the one they had, it would be anachronistic to assume it because of our modern perspective. It is also not the intention to prove that where women played a role in public life they were 'as good as men', but rather that their role has been underexplored because it is so seldom referred to by the ancient authors. Conclusions drawn from the evidence collected here may therefore not be viewed favourably by many feminist scholars - even non-feminists have expressed the notion that scholarship on women in antiquity has 'failed' because it has not shown women to have any political power (see for example the review on Judith Hallett's book, *American Historical Review*, December 1985).

While this study is primarily concerned with the evidence about women, obviously this had to be examined within the holistic context of Roman African society, since one would wish to avoid a study which examines something so peculiarly distinct from society that it is 'reminiscent of a botanist studying an endangered species of exotic plant, or a natural scientist writing about an obscure insect' (Cameron (1989a: 9) on Balsdon's

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<sup>1</sup> It is not the purpose in this preface to deal exhaustively with method and scope, which is the topic of the first Chapter, but rather to give a general idea of what can be expected from the topic at hand in the context of research into women in antiquity.



pioneering study: *Roman women, their history and their habits* (1974<sup>2</sup>)). It is with this aim in mind that a broad overview of the cultures of Roman Africa has been included (Chapter 2) which will be referred to in the rest of the text.

Scholars researching Roman women relied initially on the literary evidence, particularly on the authors of the traditional classical canon, such as Livy or Tacitus. These ancient sources quite naturally focussed on the city of Rome itself, on the political élite within it, and derived from the late Republic and early Empire. The individual women of the Roman aristocracy who featured in these works became the mainstay of early scholarship on Roman women, even though they were actually used in function of a particular author's literary purpose rather than for biographies of their lives: 'Women have their uses for historians. They offer relief from warfare, legislation and the history of ideas ... ladies of rank ... are a seductive topic' (Syme 1988: 186-7). The women noted individually by ancient writers are often mentioned exactly because they are unusual, either in their virtue, as defined by society, or their lack of it. The picture of these socially dominant women was therefore one of female independence and influence, particularly when compared with conclusions reached on Athenian women, the other focal point of interest for gender studies in Antiquity. This was of course not the full picture. By focussing on individual literary figures this type of study neglected the contribution to history by the majority of women. In reaction to this the scholarly focus changed to the 'ordinary women', studies based mainly on the evidence of inscriptions, papyri and archaeology. The daily lives of women through amassing statistics for property, marriage, childbearing, age at death and so on, therefore emerged quite independently from the literature.

In examining women's contribution to the development of Roman African society the present study has aimed at finding a balance between these two areas of evidence for women by taking into account both the more prominent women of literature (such as Pudentilla in Apuleius' *Apologia* or the 3<sup>rd</sup> century martyr Perpetua) as well as the lesser known lives of the women who are known to us only from inscriptions (private and honorary), imagery (wall paintings, mosaics and sculpture), and what archaeology can tell us about their living conditions. Nevertheless the overwhelming majority of the evidence related to the urban areas, to those groups of a certain financial standing, and also, of course, to those women who functioned in or on the fringes of Romanized society, as opposed to native or indigenous women outside it. The volume of information, particularly in the area of epigraphy, was considerable. It is therefore not the intention of this study to provide an exhaustive compilation of data on every epitaph and dedication in which women are mentioned, but rather to point to significant trends for which enough evidence can be found, and to illustrate this by means of a few representative examples.

Most general works on Roman women used Apuleius as easily as Aulus Gellius in gathering evidence on 'Roman women', regardless of the particular geographical area in which the evidence was found, since they (usually quite correctly) assumed a common Romanized context. While this is not a comparative study between the women in Romanized Africa and the women in Rome, to a certain extent there was an inevitable overlap, and much of what was revealed about women in the African cities can be paralleled with that of women in Rome itself or in the other provinces of the Empire. This is largely due to the fact that the evidence on women consists mostly of ideal images, and while these were not necessarily a reflection of reality, anomalies and signs of African influence were less common. This does not, however, devalue the evidence, since many interesting conclusions can be drawn from the levels of African, Punic, Roman and even Greek influence on the centuries under investigation. Where aspects of women's lives in the African provinces were difficult to authenticate with hard evidence, it was therefore possible to use examples from Rome to explain or elucidate the Roman African

evidence. This still does not entirely solve the problem, since some features of women's lives, such as relationships among women - mothers, daughters, sisters - remain in the shadows, even for the better documented context of Rome itself, and we can only use plausible conjecture to arrive at some tentative conclusions. The occasional examples used from the non-African context are not the only examples which can be located in the Roman world, but were chosen as representative of Roman society in a particular aspect, as *pars pro toto*. This study therefore includes no elucidation of these single representative cases from the larger Roman world, since such information can be found in the appropriate general works on Roman women.

This brings us to the second part of the challenge. What information could be meaningfully collected about the particular religious, political, social and economic situation of women in this particular geographic context? Roman Africa was chosen as the focus for this study for the following reasons. The impetus for the investigation was the character of Pudentilla in Apuleius' *Apologia*, who emerged as wealthy, independent and influential in her private life and in her role in the society of Oea. The question was whether this was, or could be, a realistic portrait of a 2<sup>nd</sup> century woman of the municipal élite. North Africa proved to be fruitful ground to seek verification of this image, since the wealth of her Roman provinces and their level of Romanization have ensured a large amount of epigraphical (over 50 000 inscriptions) and other evidence. Northern Africa also had a rich store of tales and traditions about its indigenous women. Did these traditions have any influence on Roman African thought and culture, or did the tradition survive outside it only? Such questions could only be answered by a detailed study of the Roman African source material.





## ABBREVIATIONS

Abbreviations given below were used for works, collections and series often referred to in the text, followed by a list of abbreviations for ancient authors and works cited in this work. While it is traditional to use the journal abbreviations given by *L'Année Philologique*, I have elected in the Bibliography to give these titles in full for clarity and consistency, since a number of journals used are not specifically Classical.

### ABBREVIATIONS FOR COLLECTIONS AND REFERENCE WORKS

<i>AE</i>	<i>L'Année épigraphique</i> (Paris, 1888 - ).
<i>BCTH</i>	<i>Bulletin archéologique du Comité des Travaux historiques</i> (Paris: Ministère de l'Éducation nationale).
<i>CCL</i>	<i>Corpus Christianorum, Series Latina</i> (Turnhout - Paris, 1953 -).
<i>CIG</i>	<i>Corpus Inscriptionum Graecorum</i> (Berlin, 1825 - 1877).
<i>CIL</i>	<i>Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum</i> (Berlin, 1863 - ). All references are to Book VIII unless otherwise stated.
<i>CIS</i>	<i>Corpus Inscriptionum Semiticarum</i> (Paris, 1926 - ).
<i>CLE</i>	<i>Carmina Latina Epigraphica</i> , edited by F. Buecheler (Leipzig, 1895-1897). Suppl. E. Lommatzsch (1926).
<i>CSEL</i>	<i>Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum</i> (Vienna, 1866 - ).
<i>DT</i>	<i>Defixionum tabellae quotquot innotuerunt tam in Graecis Orientis quam in totius Occidentis partibus praeter Atticas in CIA editas</i> , edited by Auguste Audollent (Paris 1904).
<i>DCPP</i>	<i>Dictionnaire de la civilisation phénicienne et punique</i> , edited by E. Lipiński (Turnhout: Brepols, 1992).
<i>FgrH</i>	<i>Die Fragmente der griechischen Historiker</i> , edited by F. Jacoby (Leiden: Brill, 1923 - ).
<i>FHG</i>	<i>Fragmenta Historicum Graecorum</i> , edited by C. Müller (Paris, 1841-1870).
<i>FHN</i>	<i>Fontes Historiae Nubiorum</i> , edited by T.Eide, T. Hägg, R. Holton Pierce and L. Török (Bergen: John Grieg AS, 1998).
<i>IAM</i>	<i>Inscriptions antiques du Maroc</i> edited by L. Galand (Libyan), J.G. Février (Punic and Neo-Punic) and G.Vajda (Hebrew) (Paris, 1966).
<i>ILA</i>	<i>Inscriptions latine d'Afrique</i> , edited by R. Cagnat, A. Merlin and L. Chatelin (Paris 1923).
<i>ILAlg I, II</i>	<i>Inscriptions latines de l'Algérie</i> vol I and II, edited by S. Gsell, E. Albertini J. Zeiller, H.-G. Pflaum and L. Leschi (Paris 1922-1957).
<i>ILC</i>	<i>Inscriptiones Latinae Collectio</i> , edited by J. Caspar von Orelli, vol II.
<i>ILCV</i>	<i>Inscriptiones Latinae Christianae Veteres</i> , edited by E. Diehl (Berlin, 1925-1931).
<i>ILM</i>	<i>Inscriptions latines du Maroc</i> , edited by L. Chatelain (Paris 1942).
<i>ILS</i>	<i>Inscriptiones Latinae Selectae</i> , 3 vols, edited by H. Dessau (Berlin, 1892 - 1916).
<i>ILT</i>	<i>Inscriptions latines de la Tunisie</i> , edited by A. Merlin (Paris, 1944).
<i>IRT</i>	<i>Inscriptions of Roman Tripolitania</i> , edited by J.M. Reynolds and J.B. Ward-Perkins (Rome/London, 1952).
<i>IRT<sup>e</sup></i>	<a href="http://rubens.anu.edu.au/new/IRT/indices/245.html">http://rubens.anu.edu.au/new/IRT/indices/245.html</a> .
<i>L&amp;S</i>	<i>A Latin dictionary</i> , revised and edited by C.T. Lewis (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980).
<i>ODB</i>	<i>Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium</i> , edited by A.P. Kazhdan (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991).
<i>PCBE</i>	<i>Prosopographie chrétienne du Bas Empire. Volume I: Afrique</i> , edited by A. Mandouze (Paris: Éditions du Centre national de la recherche scientifique, 1982).
<i>PFOS</i>	<i>Prosopographie des femmes de l'ordre sénatorial, Ier - IIe siècles</i> , 2 vols edited

	by M.-Th. Raepsaet-Charlier (Louvain, 1987).
<i>PG</i>	<i>Patrologia Graeca</i> , edited by J.-P. Migne (Paris, 1857-1866).
<i>PIR<sup>1</sup>, PIR<sup>2</sup></i>	<i>Prosopographia Imperii Romani</i> I, II, III, edited by E. Groag and A. Stein (Berlin, 1897-1898, second edition, Berlin and Leipzig, 1933 -).
<i>PL</i>	<i>Patrologia Latina</i> , edited by J.-P. Migne (Paris: Éditions Garniers, 1878 - 1890).
<i>PLRE</i>	<i>Prosopography of the Later Roman Empire</i> . Vol. I edited by A.H.M. Jones, J.R. Martindale and J. Morris; Vols. II and III (i-ii) edited by J.R. Martindale (Cambridge, 1971, 1980).
<i>PLS</i>	<i>Patrologia Latina Supplementum</i> , edited by A. Harmann (Paris 1957 - ).
<i>RE</i>	<i>Real-Encyclopädie der classischen Altertumswissenschaft</i> , edited by G. Wissowa, E. Kroll <i>et al</i> (Berlin, 1893 - 1972).
<i>RES</i>	<i>Répertoire d'Épigraphie Sémitique</i> , edited by J. Pirenne (Paris, 1968).
<i>RIC</i>	<i>The Roman Imperial Coinage</i> , 9 volumes, edited by H.B. Mattingly <i>et al</i> (London 1923-1984).
<i>RIL</i>	<i>Recueil des inscriptions libyques</i> , edited by J.B. Chabot (Paris, 1940-1941).
<i>SC</i>	<i>Sources Chrétiennes</i> (Paris, 1943 - ).
<i>SEG</i>	<i>Supplementum Epigraphicum Graecum</i> (Leiden, Alphen, Amsterdam, 1923 - ).
<i>Talb</i>	<i>Tablettes Albertini, Actes privés de l'époque Vandale</i> , in <i>The Duke Databank of Documentary Papyri</i> : <a href="http://perseus.csad.ox.ac.uk/cgi-bin/p...%3A1999.05.0241&amp;query=document%3D%2315">http://perseus.csad.ox.ac.uk/cgi-bin/p...%3A1999.05.0241&amp;query=document%3D%2315</a> .
<i>TLL</i>	<i>Thesaurus Linguae Latinae</i> (Leipzig, 1900 - ).





# ABBREVIATIONS FOR ANCIENT AUTHORS AND WORKS

<i>Acta Maximiliani Martyris</i> .....	<i>Acta Max. Mart.</i>
Ambrose	
<i>De Abraham</i> .....	<i>De Abr.</i>
<i>De Virginibus</i> .....	<i>De Virg.</i>
Ammianus Marcellinus.....	Amm. Mar.
<i>Anthologia Graeca</i> .....	<i>Anthol. Graec.</i>
<i>Anthologia Latina</i> .....	<i>Anthol. Lat.</i>
Appian.....	App.
<i>Lybica</i> .....	<i>Lyb.</i>
<i>Numidica</i> .....	<i>Num.</i>
<i>Punica</i> .....	<i>Pun.</i>
<i>Bellorum Civilium</i> .....	<i>Bell. Civ.</i>
Apuleius.....	Apul.
<i>Apologia</i> .....	<i>Apol.</i>
<i>Florida</i> .....	<i>Flor.</i>
<i>Metamorphoses</i> .....	<i>Metam.</i>
Arnobius.....	Arnob.
<i>Adversus Nationes</i> .....	<i>Adv. Nat.</i>
Augustine.....	Aug.
<i>Confessions</i> .....	<i>Conf.</i>
<i>Contra Academicos</i> .....	<i>Contra Acad.</i>
<i>Contra Cresconium Grammaticum</i> .....	<i>Contra Cresc.</i>
<i>Contra Epistulam Parmeniani</i> .....	<i>Contra Ep. Parmen.</i>
<i>Contra Gaudentium</i> .....	<i>Contra Gaud.</i>
<i>De Adulterinis Coniugiis</i> .....	<i>De Adult. Coniug.</i>
<i>De Beata Vita</i> .....	<i>De B. Vita</i>
<i>De Bono Coniugali</i> .....	<i>De Bono Coniug.</i>
<i>De Bono Viduitatis</i> .....	<i>De Bono Vid.</i>
<i>De Civitate Dei</i> .....	<i>De Civ. Dei</i>
<i>De Cura pro Mortuis Gerenda</i> .....	<i>De Cura pro Mort. Ger.</i>
<i>De Devitiis</i> .....	<i>De Dev.</i>
<i>De Doctrina Christiana</i> .....	<i>De Doctr. Chr.</i>
<i>De Haeres</i> .....	<i>De Haer.</i>
<i>De Moribus Ecclesiae Catholicae</i> .....	<i>De Mor. Eccl. Cath.</i>
<i>De Natura et Origine Animae</i> .....	<i>De Nat. et Orig. Anim.</i>
<i>De Nuptiis et Concupiscentia</i> <i>ad Valerius</i> .....	<i>De Nupt. et Concup.</i>
<i>De Opera Monachorum</i> .....	<i>De Op. Monach.</i>
<i>De Ordine</i> .....	<i>De Ord.</i>
<i>De Sancta Virginitate</i> .....	<i>De S. Virg.</i>
<i>De VIII Dulcitii Quaestionibus</i> .....	<i>De VIII Dulc. Quaes.</i>
<i>De Sermone Domine in Monte</i> .....	<i>De Serm. Dom. in M.</i>
<i>De Utilitate Credendi</i> .....	<i>De Ut. Cred.</i>
<i>De Unitate Ecclesiae</i> .....	<i>De Unit. Eccl.</i>
<i>Enarrationes in Psalmos</i> .....	<i>Enarr. in Ps.</i>
<i>Enchiridion de Fide</i> <i>Spe et Caritate</i> .....	<i>Enchir. de Fide, Spe et Car.</i>
<i>Epistulae</i> .....	<i>Ep.</i>
<i>Epistulae ad Romanos Inchoata</i> <i>Expositio</i> .....	<i>Ep. ad Rom. Inch. Exp.</i>
<i>In Iohannis Evangelium Tractatus</i> .....	<i>In Ioh. Ev. Tract.</i>
<i>Regularis Informatio</i> .....	<i>Reg. Inform.</i>
<i>Sermones</i> .....	<i>Serm.</i>
<i>Soliloquia</i> .....	<i>Solil.</i>
Aulus Gellius.....	Aul. Gell.
<i>Noctes Atticae</i> .....	<i>NA</i>
Aurelius Victor.....	Aur. Vict.
<i>De Caesaribus</i> .....	<i>De Caes.</i>
Ausonius	
<i>Parentalia</i> .....	<i>Par.</i>
Caelius Aurelianus.....	Cael. Aurel.
<i>Celeres sive Acutae Passiones</i> .....	<i>Cel. Pass.</i>
<i>Tardae sive Chronicae Passiones</i> .....	<i>Tard. Pass.</i>
Caesar.....	Caes.
<i>De Bello Gallico</i> .....	<i>De Bello Gall.</i>
Callimachus	
<i>Hymnus in Apollinem</i> .....	<i>Hymn. in Apoll.</i>
Cassius Dio.....	Dio
Cicero.....	Cic.
<i>Brutus</i> .....	<i>Brut.</i>
<i>De Finibus Bonorum et Malorum</i> .....	<i>De Fin. Bon. et Mal.</i>
<i>De Officiis</i> .....	<i>De Off.</i>
<i>De Senectute</i> .....	<i>De Senec.</i>
<i>Epistulam ad Atticum</i> .....	<i>Ep. ad Att.</i>
<i>Orator</i> .....	<i>Orat.</i>
<i>In Verrem</i> .....	<i>In Verr.</i>
<i>Pro Caelio</i> .....	<i>Pro Cael.</i>
<i>Pro Sestio</i> .....	<i>Pro Sest.</i>
<i>Pro Sextio Roscio Amerino</i> .....	<i>Pro Sext. Rosc. Am.</i>

Claudian.....	Claud.
<i>De Bello Gildonico</i> .....	<i>De Bello Gild.</i>
<i>Epithalamium de Nuptiis</i> <i>Honorii Augusti</i> .....	<i>Epithal. de Nupt. Hon. Aug.</i>
Clemens Alexandrinus	
<i>Paedagogos</i> .....	<i>Paed.</i>
<i>Codex Iustinianus</i> .....	<i>Cod. Iust.</i>
<i>Codex Theodosianus</i> .....	<i>Cod. Theod.</i>
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<i>De Re Rustica</i> .....	<i>De Re Rust.</i>
Commodianus.....	Commod.
<i>Instructiones</i> .....	<i>Instruct.</i>
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<i>Iohannis</i> .....	<i>Ioh.</i>
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<i>De Viris Illustribus</i> .....	<i>De Viris Ill.</i>
<i>Digest</i> .....	<i>Dig.</i>
Cyprian.....	Cypr.
<i>Ad Demetrianum</i> .....	<i>Ad Demetr.</i>
<i>Ad Donatum</i> .....	<i>Ad Don.</i>
<i>De Lapsis</i> .....	<i>De Laps.</i>
<i>De Ecclesiae Catholicae Unitate</i> .....	<i>De Eccl. Cath. Unit.</i>
<i>Epistulae</i> .....	<i>Ep.</i>
<i>De Habitu Virginum</i> .....	<i>De Hab. Virg.</i>
Diodorus Siculus.....	Diod. Sic.
Ennius	
<i>Saturae</i> .....	<i>Sat.</i>
Epiphanius	
<i>Panorion Haereticorum</i> .....	<i>Pan. Haeret.</i>
Euripides.....	Eurip.
Eusebius	
<i>Historia Ecclesiastica</i> .....	<i>Hist. Eccles.</i>
<i>Vita Constantini</i> .....	<i>Vita Const.</i>
Ferrandus.....	Ferr.
<i>Vita Fulgentii</i> .....	<i>Vita Fulg.</i>
Flavius Philostratus	
<i>Vitae Sophistarum</i> .....	<i>Vit. Sophis.</i>
<i>Vita Apollonii Tyanensis</i> .....	<i>Vit. Apol. Tyan.</i>
Frontinus.....	Frontin.
<i>Strategemata</i> .....	<i>Strat.</i>
Fronto	
<i>Epistulae</i> .....	<i>Ep.</i>
<i>Epistulae ad Amicos</i> .....	<i>Ep. ad Amic.</i>
<i>Epistulae ad Antoninum Pium</i> .....	<i>Ep. ad Ant. Pium</i>
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<i>Epistulae ad Marcum Caesarem</i> .....	<i>Ad M. Caes.</i>
Fulgentius.....	Fulg.
<i>Expositio Sermonum Antiquorum</i> .....	<i>Expos. Serm. Antiqu.</i>
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<i>Institutiones</i> .....	<i>Instit.</i>
Galen	
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<i>Adversos Haereses</i> .....	<i>Adv. Haer.</i>
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John Chrysostom	
<i>De Non Iterando Coniugio</i> .....	<i>De Non Iter. Coniug.</i>
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John of Ephesus	
<i>De Beatis Orientalibus</i> .....	<i>De Beatis Orient.</i>
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<i>Antiquitates Iudaicae</i> .....	<i>Antiqu. Iud.</i>
<i>De Bello Iudaico</i> .....	<i>De Bello Iud.</i>
Justin	
<i>Historiae Philippicae</i> .....	<i>Hist. Phil.</i>

Justin Martyr  
*Apologeta*..... *Apolog.*  
 Juvenal..... Juv.  
*Saturae*..... *Sat.*  
 Lactantius..... Lact.  
*Divinae Institutiones*..... *Div. Instit.*  
*Laudatio Turiae*..... *Laud. Turiae*  
 Livy..... Liv.  
 Lucan  
*Pharsalia*..... *Phars.*  
 Lucian of Samosata  
*De Syria Dea*..... *De Syr. Dea*  
 Luxorius..... Lux.  
*Epigrammata*..... *Epigr.*  
*Epithalamium*..... *Epithal.*  
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*Astronomica*..... *Astron.*  
 Minucius Felix..... Min. Felix  
*Octavius*..... *Oct.*  
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*Novellae Iustiniani*..... *Nov. Iust.*  
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 Optatus..... Optat.  
*De Schismate Donatistarum*..... *De Schism. Don.*  
 Oribasius  
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 Orosius  
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 Palladius..... Pallad.  
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 Paul of Aegina  
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*Moralia*..... *Mor.*  
*Coniugalia Praecepta*..... *Coniug. Praec.*  
*Quaestiones Romanae*..... *Quaest. Rom.*  
*Vitae Parallelae: Tiberius Gracchus*..... *Tib. Gr.*  
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*Lycurgus*..... *Lyc.*  
*Pompey*..... *Pomp.*  
*Solon*..... *Sol.*  
 Polybius..... Polyb.  
 Pomponius Mela..... Pomp. Mela  
 Pontius..... Pont.  
*Vita Cypriani*..... *Vita Cypr.*  
 Porphyry  
*De Abstinencia*..... *De Abst.*  
 Possidius..... Poss.  
*Vita Augustini*..... *Vita Aug.*  
 Procopius..... Procop.  
*De Bellis*..... *De Bell.*  
*De Bello Vandalico*..... *De Bello Vand.*  
*De Aedificiis*..... *De Aedif.*  
*De Anekdotis*..... *De Anek*

Propertius..... Prop.  
 Prudentius  
*Contra Orationem Symmachi*..... *Contra Orat. Symm.*  
*Peristephanon*..... *Peristeph.*  
 Quintilian..... Quint.  
*Institutio Oratoria*..... *Instit. Orat.*  
 Quodvultdeus..... Quodvult.  
*Liber de Promissionibus*  
*et Praedictionibus Dei*..... *Lib. de Prom.*  
*Sermo de Tempore Barbarico*..... *Sermo de Temp. Barb.*  
 Sallust..... Sall.  
*Bellum Iugurthinum*..... *Bell. Iug.*  
 Salvian  
*De Gubernatione Dei*..... *De Gub. Dei*  
 Scriptores Historiae Augustae.. SHA  
*Elagabalus*..... *Elagab.*  
*Gallienus*..... *Gall.*  
*Septimius Severus*..... *Sept. Sev.*  
 Seneca..... Sen.  
*De Consolatione ad Marciam*..... *Ad Marciam*  
*De Constantia Sapiens*..... *De Const. Sap.*  
 Sidonius Apollinaris..... Sid. Apol.  
*Carmina*..... *Carm.*  
 Silius Italicus..... Sil. Ital.  
*Punica*..... *Pun.*  
 Soranus of Ephesus  
*Gynaecia*..... *Gyn.*  
 Suetonius..... Suet.  
*De Grammaticis et Rhetoribus*..... *De Gram.*  
*Divus Iulius*..... *Iul.*  
 Tacitus..... Tac.  
*Agricola*..... *Agric.*  
*Annales*..... *Ann.*  
*Dialogus de Oratoribus*..... *Dial. de Orat.*  
*Germaniae*..... *Germ.*  
*Historiae*..... *Hist.*  
 Tertullian..... Tert.  
*Ad Martyras*..... *Ad Mart.*  
*Ad Nationes*..... *Ad Nat.*  
*Ad Scapulam*..... *Ad Scap.*  
*Ad Uxorem*..... *Ad Uxor.*  
*Apologeticum*..... *Apologet.*  
*De Anima*..... *De An.*  
*De Baptismo*..... *De Bapt.*  
*De Cultu Feminarum*..... *De Cult. Fem.*  
*De Exhortatione Castitatis*..... *De Exhort. Cast.*  
*De Idololatria*..... *De Idol.*  
*De Monagamia*..... *De Monog.*  
*De Oratione*..... *De Orat.*  
*De Pallio*..... *De Pal.*  
*De Praescriptionem Haereticorum*..... *De Praescr. Haer.*  
*De Pudicitia*..... *De Pudic.*  
*De Spectaculis*..... *De Spect.*  
*De Virginibus Velandis*..... *De Virg. Vel.*  
 Theodoret of Cyrrhus..... Theod.  
*Epistulae*..... *Ep.*  
 Tyrranius Rufus  
*Historia Ecclesiastica*..... *Hist. Eccles.*  
 Ulpian  
*Regulae*..... *Reg.*  
 Valerius Maximus..... Val. Max.  
 Varro  
*De Lingua Latina*..... *De Ling. Lat.*  
 Vergil..... Verg.  
*Aeneid*..... *Aen.*  
 Victor Vitensis..... Vict.  
*Historia Persecutionis Africanae*  
*Provinciae sub Gaiserico et*  
*Hunirico regibus Wandalorum*..... *Hist. Persec..*  
 Vindicanus Afer..... Vind. Afer  
 Zosimus..... Zos.  
*Historia Nova*..... *Hist. Nova.*





## DEFINITIONS OF TERMS AND CONCEPTS AS USED IN THIS THESIS

**Roman Africans** - those born in these provinces and Romanized as well as those of non-African origin who settled there.

**African or native Africans** - including all the tribes which inhabited North Africa before Roman occupation; indigenous peoples, but not necessarily Negroid.

**Berber** - native or indigenous North Africans.

**Libyans** - a term used indiscriminately by ancient and modern writers to refer generally to the African tribes west of Egypt, but here used specifically of native Africans inhabiting the area across Cyrenaica, Tripolitania and Africa Proconsularis.

**Mauri/Moors** - indigenous tribes inhabiting the Western part of North Africa; in Late Antiquity also used by some sources for all indigenous tribes of North Africa.

**Carthaginians** - Phoenician settlers or Poeni

**Catholic** - the orthodox religion held by Rome and later Constantinople

**Maghreb** - Africa north of the Sahara desert, west of the Nile.

**Fezzān** - the area of about 551 000 km<sup>2</sup> on the Atlas slopes in the south which today forms part of the modern state of Libya. In ancient times it was the land of the Garamantes.

**Wadi or oued** - stream or small river

Dj = Djebel = mountain

Hr = Henchir = literally farm, meaning a sprawling ruin

Kh = Kherba = ruin

## OTHER CONVENTIONS

Latin names of the authors and works of antiquity have been used except where the source or context makes this inappropriate.

Translations of the Greek and Latin texts have been taken or adapted from the works cited in the Bibliography. In the case of inscriptions or other documentary sources, the translations are the present author's own unless otherwise indicated.



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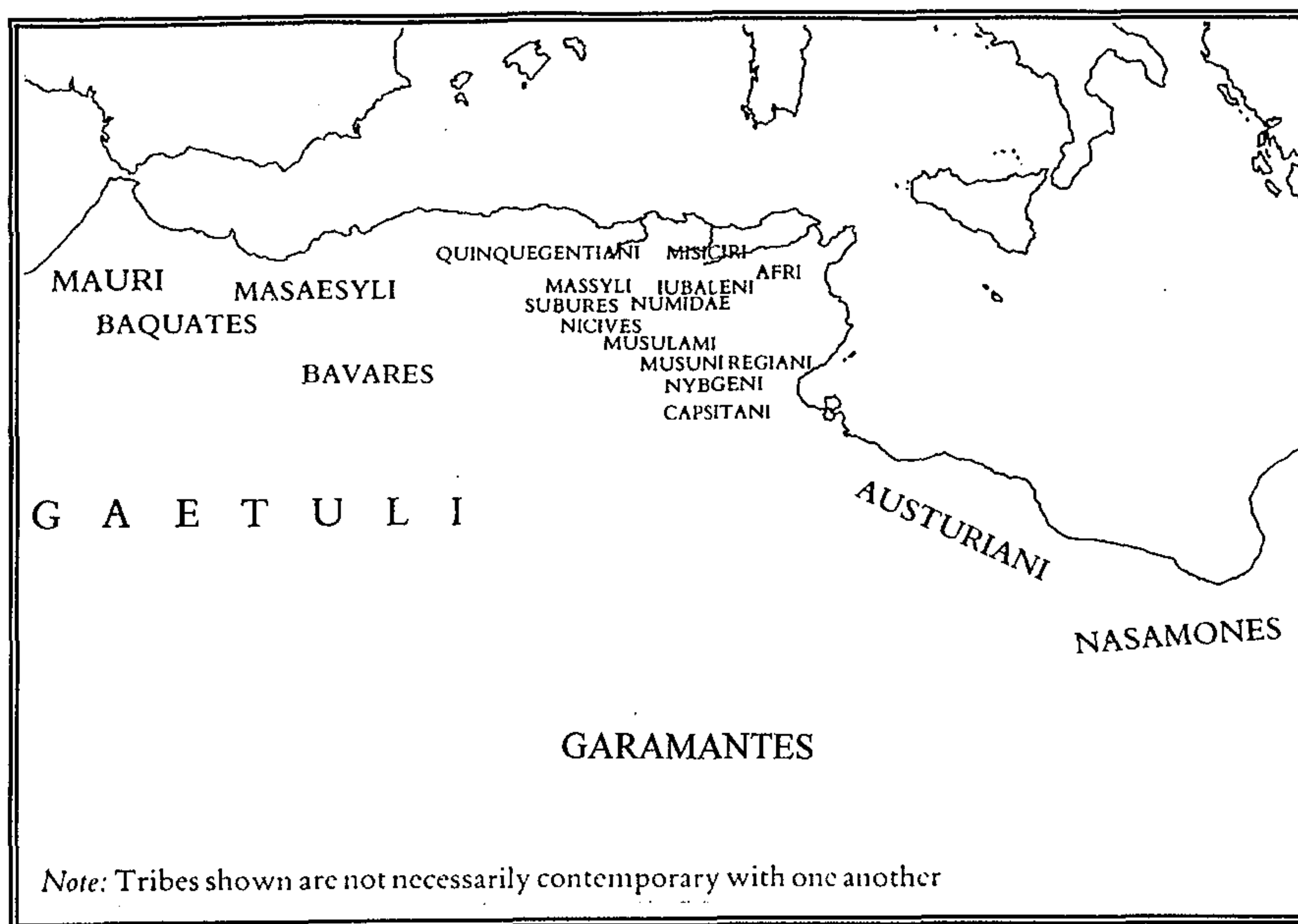


FIGURE 2. DISTRIBUTION OF MAIN AFRICAN TRIBES

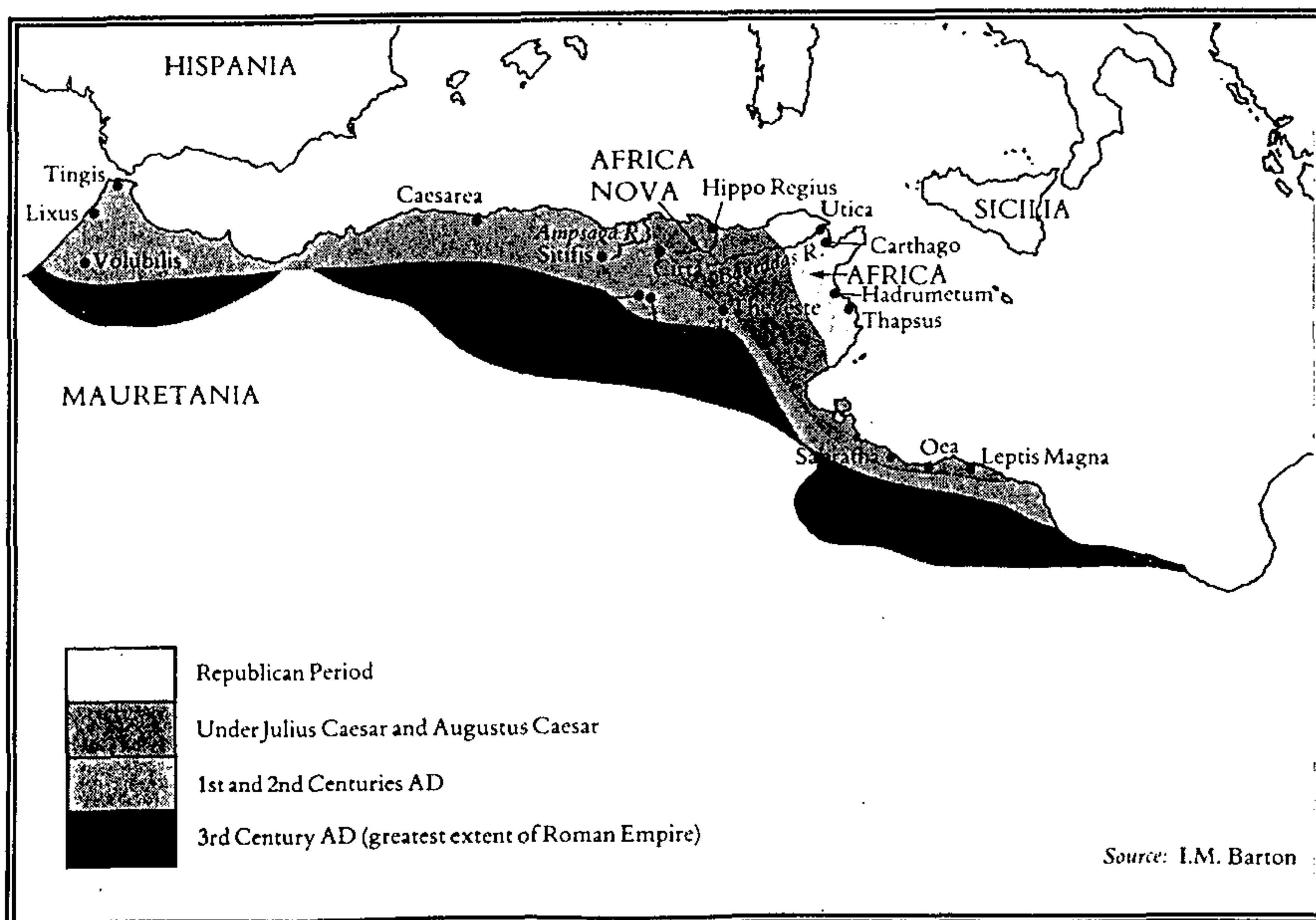


FIGURE 3. AFRICAN PROVINCES AND MAIN URBAN CENTRES FROM THE 1<sup>ST</sup> TO THE 3<sup>RD</sup> CENTURY AD





FIGURE 4. NORTH AFRICA IN THE 4<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY



FIGURE 5. MAIN PROVINCES DURING THE BYZANTINE PERIOD

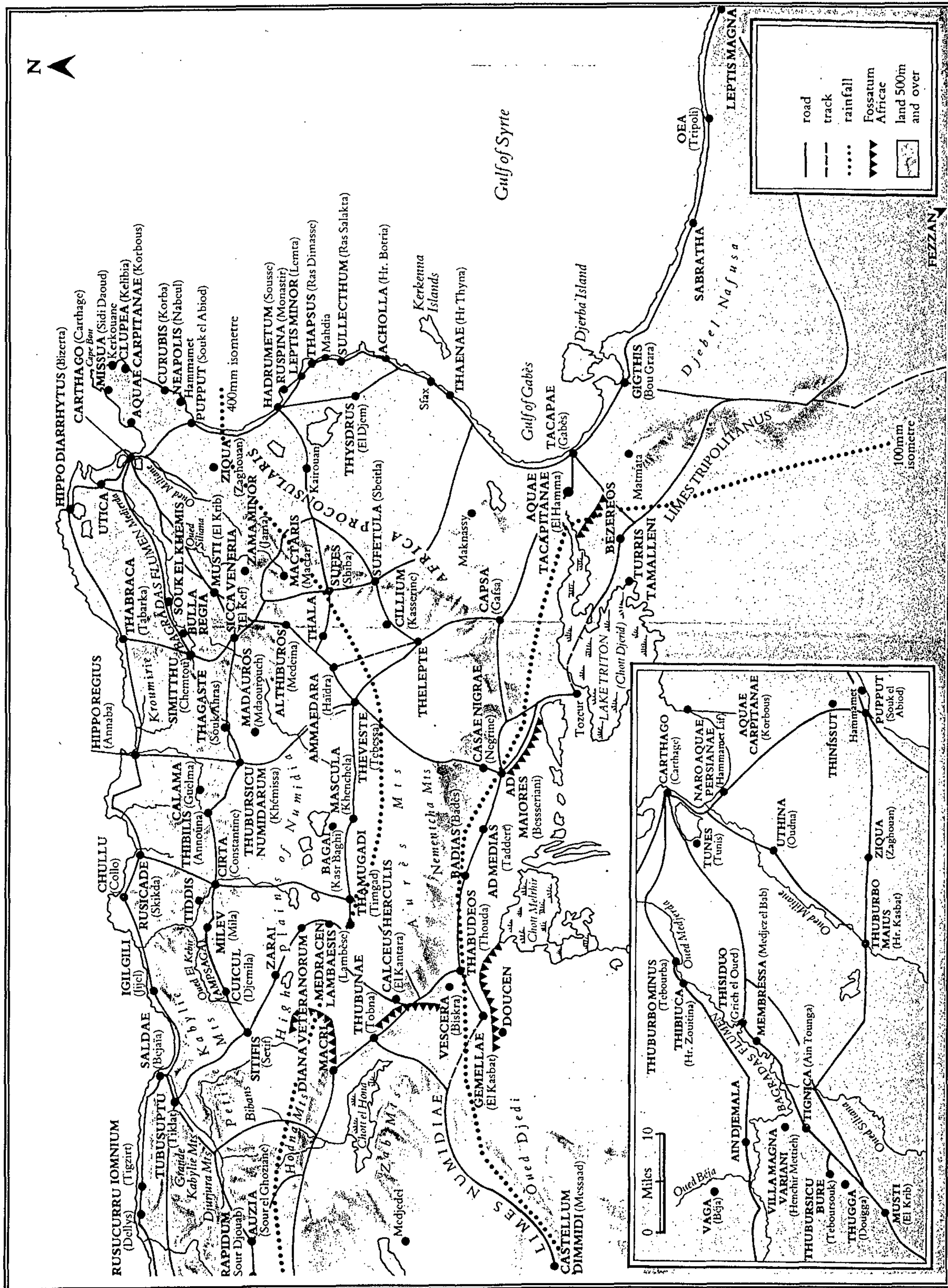


FIGURE 6A ROMAN NORTH AFRICA: EASTERN HALF



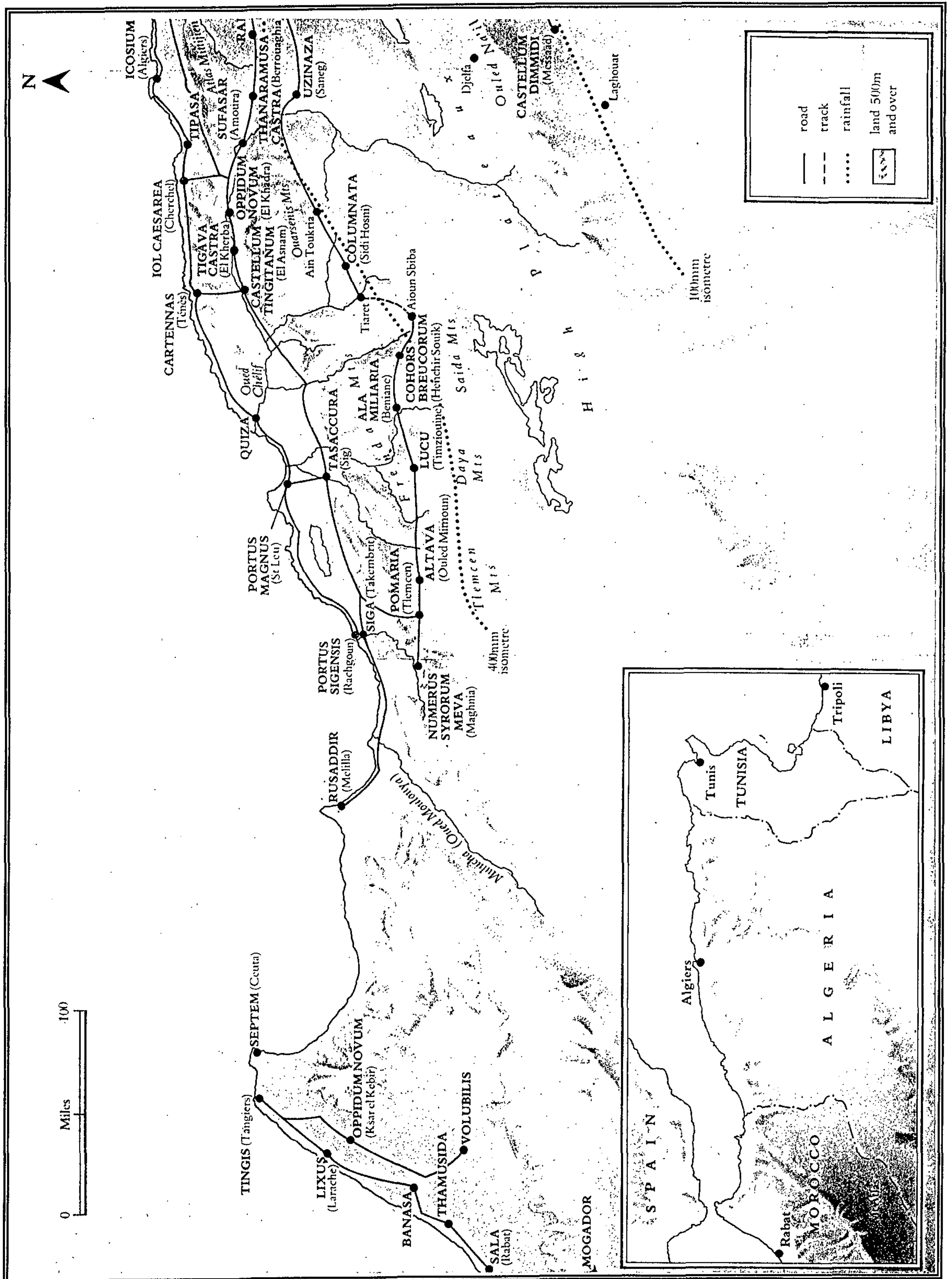


FIGURE 6B ROMAN NORTH AFRICA: WESTERN HALF

PART I

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**ANCIENT WOMEN AND  
ROMAN AFRICA**

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## CHAPTER 1

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# APPROACHING WOMEN'S HISTORY AND OTHER METHODOLOGICAL REFLECTIONS

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Any study about women in antiquity is immediately confronted with a methodological challenge since, to put it bluntly, there is simply not enough evidence of the kind that would show real insight into their lives. Relatively few ancient sources are concerned with setting down the realities of women's existence, since this was seldom the primary concern of ancient male authors and artists, or male and female commemorators (in the case of inscriptions). The interpretation of such evidence as we do have is therefore of crucial importance.

### INVESTIGATING WOMEN IN ANTIQUITY

Over the past three decades various approaches have been used in the collection of data, the analysis of evidence and experimental design in the writing of women's history. Initial studies were serial histories which collected anecdotal material of individual women with a view to establishing a collective female biography, but which made simplistic assumptions about the objectivity and empiricism of the source material. This is referred to as 'positivism'. The deficiencies of this method consequently produced a large volume of epistemological work,<sup>1</sup> in itself an indication that methodology for this area of social history is highly problematic.

Positivism is essentially empirical in outlook in that it takes into account only the verifiable evidence, claiming thereby a measure of objectivity, and studying these 'facts in evidence' in a developmental line. In doing so the acceptance of dichotomies indicating hierarchical value (male over female, public over private, same over 'other' and production over reproduction) is implied or, with a relative lack of critical thought, reproduced as 'natural' rather than man-made or culturally produced.<sup>2</sup> This type of approach is exemplified in an earlier study

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<sup>1</sup> For example PERROT (1984): *Writing women's history*, FOLEY (1986): *Reflections of women in Antiquity*, CULHAM (1986): 'Ten years after Pomeroy', SKINNER (1986): 'Rescuing Creusa', BLOK (1987): *Sexual asymmetry*, CHRISTIAN (1988): 'The race for theory', FRENCH (1990): 'What is central for the study of women in Antiquity?', SCOTT (1991): 'Women's history' and (1998): *Gender and the politics of history*, HALLETT (1992): 'Heeding our own native informants', BEARD (1993): 'The classic woman', RABINOWITZ & RICHLIN (1993): *Feminist theory and the classics* as well as a great number of introductory chapters to works on women in antiquity.

<sup>2</sup> On the dangers of positivism in women's studies see BLOK (1987): *Sexual asymmetry*, 4. In her discussion on ancient Greece, SCHMITT-PANTEL (1984): *From ancient goddess to Christian saints*, 77, points out that: 'Methodological caution is essential in an area

of women in Roman Africa by Leila Ladjimi-Sebaï (Aix-en-Provence, 1977). Two-thirds of this dissertation consists of the collection of 214 inscriptions (with thorough epigraphical detail) relating to women in the Roman African provinces. The literary sources were clearly a secondary consideration for the author, but even so, no attention is paid to the problematic nature of any of the source material regarding political and cultural influences or conventions, nor does Ladjimi-Sebaï take into account the different realities of ideology and practice which so evidently played a role in epigraphy.<sup>3</sup> The obvious limitations of this type of approach necessitated the deconstruction of the representations of the female in the hope of finding an underlying meaning and insight into gender relations in Roman African antiquity. Rather than letting the ancient sources speak for themselves, the evidence on women in Roman Africa needed to be analysed together with the social structures in which it arose. The epigraphical evidence has grown in volume since the dissertation of Ladjimi-Sebaï, with some significant additions, and needs updating. The great volume of work on women in antiquity which has introduced new perspectives and methods of dealing with the source material on women in antiquity has made it possible to throw light on aspects which have remained obscure in the earlier study.<sup>4</sup>

To bring us closer to the reality of the women of Roman North Africa we need to look beyond the immediate testimony of their lives, at the broader social, economic and political context in which women found themselves. An analysis of the context entails a historical method which takes into account the process of cause and effect by which women in the 3<sup>rd</sup> century AD found themselves in a different situation to their predecessors of the 1<sup>st</sup> century. Many of these changes, such as the *Constitutio Antoniniana*, were not designed to accommodate women, but women were affected by them, as were all members of ancient society in one way or another.

Secondly, the written material which gives direct evidence of women must be scrutinized in a critical examination of the motives of the author, and hence of the use of language itself. But whatever a particular text may try to convey is not only transferred through the explicit words but also through the gaps and silences, which entails what Skinner (1987: 3) terms 'the application of research methods base largely upon controlled inference'. Here ancient historians have borrowed freely from the fields of anthropology and sociology, which are briefly discussed below. Nevertheless, it is the historical and philological approach which must form the backbone of any attempt to assess the role and position of women in Roman North Africa.

Structural and symbolic anthropology challenges the assumption that meanings are the result of their authors'

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in which the weight of ideologies, often undeclared, is particularly great'. The same caution can be taken with regard to the study of any ancient society. However, not many works written since the seventies employ the pure positivism demonstrated by MACURDY (1932): *Hellenistic queens*, BALSDON (1974<sup>2</sup>): *Roman women, their history and their habits*, or LADJIMI-SEBAÏ (1977): *La femme en Afrique à l'époque romaine*, who assume that there is no world outside the ancient texts, and that the ancient author is free from bias so that his statements may be used as fact.

<sup>3</sup> Although in its introduction the study professes to investigate women up to the Byzantine period, it peters out with the epigraphical source material by the close of the 3<sup>rd</sup> century AD. Admittedly source material for the Vandal and Byzantine periods is very limited, as will be seen from the discussion below, but even the Christian influences of the 2<sup>nd</sup> to 3<sup>rd</sup> centuries are not discussed by Ladjimi-Sebaï, though Tertullian and Augustine are quoted a few times for evidence of pagan customs.

<sup>4</sup> Otherwise nothing substantial has been added to the subject, although many books and articles refer to Roman African women *en passant* as part of a larger framework. for example SHAW (1987a): 'The age of Roman girls at marriage', LASSÈRE (1977): *Ubique populus*, FANTHAM (1993): 'Pudentilla or the wealthy widow's choice' and others cited in the Bibliography. Such studies of course do not cover all aspects nor do they always take into account the specific context in which this information is found. Other works on women in Africa such as LOTH (1987): *Women in ancient Africa* and the publication by the GROUPE 'AFRIQUE NOIRE' (1987): *L'histoire des femmes en Afrique*, are interesting for the African perspective but include either nothing or very little on Roman North Africa in their discussion.



intentions, an approach best identified by the work of anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss or by Michel Foucault's studies of sexuality.<sup>5</sup> This approach does not seek to establish the intrinsic meaning of an individual text, but by theory and analysis systematically elaborates on the rules and constraints of a particular society which make the generation of meaning possible in the first place. Among the best known structuralist equations are *female : nature* as *male : culture*, as well as *female : private* as *male : public*. This method therefore employs a largely artificial construct of the material which falls within the province of anthropology - kinship structures, the nuclear family, matriarchal and patriarchal authority, behavioural patterns, marriage customs, sexuality and so on. Historians of ancient society have given anthropological perspectives a sociological slant by paying attention not only to kinship structures but also to the role and function of people within the household and the function of the household within society.

Recent studies on women in antiquity have made successful use of this approach to present a coherent view of the large variety of evidence available on women,<sup>6</sup> and the public/private division has also been used to structure this historical investigation on women in Roman Africa. The anthropological perspective is useful for the study of women within the family structure, to which I have devoted Chapters 3- to 8, and the sociological for the approach to women within the public sector of Roman African society, which is the subject of Chapters 9 to 13. In following a somewhat hybrid methodology I have, like other ancient historians, borrowed freely from these disciplines. In addition, although I have not attempted a prosopographical or demographical study here, I have made use of such studies based on Roman Africa or on specific Roman African provinces, in particular those of Lassère and Shaw, to use their results and conclusions to complement my own findings and theories.

A number of studies of ancient society make use of comparative anthropology in the search for the meaning of the structures, symbols and rituals of ancient cultures, but comparative anthropological examples have been used here only in a few instances where modern African custom sheds light on ancient practices. Information on modern Berber customs, for example, was used on the general assumption that Berber tribes who live a semi-nomadic existence have not undergone profound changes in their lifestyle since Antiquity.<sup>7</sup> The following somewhat romantic view expressed by Alexander Graham (1902: 307) is still essentially upheld by later scholars of the ancient Maghreb such as Bates (1970), or Brett and Fentress (1996):

'The primitive races - the ancient Berbers of the Desert or the mountain ranges, are still in possession, preserving their old traditions of tribal and social life, and speaking almost the same tongue as their ancestors did some three thousand years ago. The old Carthaginian idiom has completely disappeared, but the Libyan or Berber dialect is still spoken by some of the Desert tribes, little altered, though with the addition of many words and expressions that are either Latin or Neo-Punic. The Numidian, the Moor

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<sup>5</sup> FOUCAULT (1985/6): *The history of sexuality*; LÉVI-STRAUSS (1974): *Anthropologie structurale*.

<sup>6</sup> POMEROY'S *Goddesses, whores, wives and slaves - women in Classical antiquity* has since its first publication in 1975 become a classic, being the first to use both literary and epigraphical source material as the basis of her account of the status of women in the Graeco-Roman world. Many studies have been published in the form of articles in specialist journals on various aspects of Roman women, for example a study of the benefactresses in the towns of Roman Italy based on honorary inscriptions by FORBIS (1990): 'Women's public image in Italian honorary inscriptions'. Two full-scale studies which examine women in the Roman provinces are: ARCHER'S *Her price is beyond rubies - women in Graeco-Roman Palestine* (1990), which examines the lives of the Jewish woman from early childhood, her role as wife and mother, to her eventual death, using an interdisciplinary approach to the legalistic, literary and documentary sources; also VAN BREMEN (1996): *The limits of participation*, which looks specifically at the role which women played in the civic life of their cities in the Greek East during the Hellenistic and Roman periods.

<sup>7</sup> This changelessness has also been noted in other cultures. Studies on social groups by Mediterranean anthropologists (for example Bourde and Martin, 1983: 267-69) have noted that conditions have changed relatively little since Classical Antiquity



and the Getulian are there also, cultivating their olives in the land of their forefathers, tending their sheep on the broad plains of the Metidja or Chelif, or moving silently from place to place, like true sons of the Desert.'

In searching for evidence of the African background, only limited results were possible, however, since while some African customs may have been present among the Romanized element of the population, we are more likely to find remnants of Punic evidence at the level of society about which we have the most evidence, since this was the dominant status group before the Roman conquest. Nevertheless, the evidence for Romanization for the groups under investigation is much stronger than the pre-Roman influences proved to be, which is why the focus of this study will be the Roman world in Africa rather than a study of northern African cultures during the Roman period.

A structural approach is however not without its dangers, and order to avoid the pitfall of taking this dichotomy as a reality rather than as a modern ideological construct, emphasis has also been given to the areas where public and private overlap. In dealing with the evidence through a structural analysis and covering a variety of topics diachronically it is to some extent unavoidable that insufficient attention is paid to the changes and developments that occur over time, something which is further complicated by the chronological breadth of the present study (which covers seven centuries). Where possible I have pointed to change and continuity over this period - also regarding general trends in the rest of the Roman world - which affected women's lives. This method has made it possible to deal comprehensively with material which chronologically, geographically and in terms of social stratification, was often extremely divergent.

The following section will briefly review the *private* : *public* dichotomy within the context of Roman society in a manner which will clarify the rationale behind the organization of the evidence and the chapter divisions in the rest of this study.

### **THE ANTHROPOLOGICAL MODEL: PUBLIC AND PRIVATE IN ROMAN SOCIETY**

Roman society held certain ideals for male and female behaviour, some which were set out by law, others by public *mores*. A Roman man identified himself in terms of his role in politics and war, whereas the Roman woman was identified in terms of her home and family.<sup>8</sup> The distinction of 'public' and 'private' as defined by Lévi-Strauss related therefore as much to physical space (*forum* as opposed to *domus*) as to a sphere of activity. The traditional virtues for men were *virtus* (courage), *fortitudo* (strength), *firmitas animi* (strength of mind, resolve) and *constantia* (self-control). For women the traditional virtues were *pudicitia* (chastity), *modestia* (modesty), *obsequium* (deference) and *lanificium* (working in wool).<sup>9</sup> These are *per se* virtues that consign women to private life and men to the public domain. The *mos maiorum* dictated that a woman's first obligation was to her *domus*, to 'manage the house and look after the children' (*cuius praecipua laus erat tueri domum et*

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<sup>8</sup> The closest Latin equivalent for the word 'family' is the *domus*, by which we understand the members contained in one household associated by marriage or kinship. The Latin *familia* has a somewhat different connotation since it embraces those individuals linked by law, thus including slaves and even freedpeople. For the complexity of defining the Roman family, see SALLER (1984b): 'Familia, *domus* and the Roman conception of the family' and NATHAN (2000): *The family in Late Antiquity*, 7. The most useful description of the Roman family can be found in BRADLEY (1991): *Discovering the Roman family*, 171.

<sup>9</sup> The last of these, *lanificia*, was understood as a symbolic virtue denoting frugality, chastity and putting hard work before pleasure, following the example of Lucretia in the tale told by Livy [1.57-60].



*inservire liberis*) [Tac., *Dial. de Orat.* 28.4].

But a rigid division between public and private is not as easily motivated in Roman society (especially for the period under discussion) as in fifth century Athens, for, as the 1<sup>st</sup> century BC author Cornelius Nepos proudly tells us:

*Quem enim Romanorum pudet uxorem ducere in conviviam? Aut cuius non mater familias primum locum tenet aedium atque in celebritate versatur?*

For what Roman is ashamed to take his wife to a dinner party? Or whose wife is not prominent at home or not involved in society? [De Viris Ill., preface 6-7]

In Rome we know of plenty of examples that speak of a less liberal attitude to women in public, however. In the 1<sup>st</sup> century AD Valerius Maximus [6.3.10-12] relates that one C. Sulpicius Gallus divorced his wife because she went out in public with her head uncovered, and another husband did the same when he saw his wife speaking openly with a freedwoman of dubious reputation. In a third example given by this author a husband divorced his wife for going to the games without his knowledge. Thus while many Roman women did have freedom of movement, a measure of autonomy in the management of their personal property and affairs, and even on occasion freedom of speech (Hortensia), in the eyes of Roman law they remained dependents with virtually no institutionalized power, a situation which made such anomalies possible.<sup>10</sup>

Women's participation in certain areas regarded as male preserves which traditionally defined the Roman aristocratic male *virtus* (such as public speaking and waging war) are regarded by most of the Roman authors as a disruption of social balances and order.<sup>11</sup> Only in the latter part of the second century AD could a term such as *mater castrorum*, for example, be contemplated.<sup>12</sup> Conversely, men who busied themselves with 'unmanly' activities were ridiculed by male authors.<sup>13</sup> In the Roman African context one of the worst calumnies Apuleius can heap on his accuser Rufinus is that he is 'effeminate' (*effeminatissime*) [Apol. 78.5], and as late as the fifth century Salvian rails against the average Carthaginian citizen, there where, apparently:

*... convertisse in muliebre[m] tolerantiam viros non usum suum tantum atque naturam, sed etiam vultum incessum habitum et totum penitus quicquid aut in sexu est aut in visu viri? ...ut cum viris nihil magis purodi esse oporteat, quam si muliebre aliquid in se habere videantur, illic nihil viris quibusdam turpius videretur, quam si in aliquo viri viderentur.*

... men converted to feminine bearing not only their habits and nature, but even their looks, walk, dress and everything that is proper to the sex or appearance of a man.... nothing should be more shameful to men than if they seem to have something feminine about them... [De Gub. Dei 7.18]

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<sup>10</sup> From the time of Augustus exceptions were made in the case of *matronae* who had more than three children (four for freedwomen), who were exempted from *tutela* or male guardianship [Gaius 1.194]. This point is discussed by POMEROY (1975): *Goddesses, whores...*, 151-152 and in greater detail by GARDNER (1986a): *Women in Roman law and society*, 194-198.

<sup>11</sup> The epic poem of Corippus, *Iohannis*, emphasizes that women had no place in tales of war and military valour. In fact, for Corippus the greatest criticism expressed of men is that they behave like women, i.e. in a cowardly manner. In this he is of course also following the epic tradition set by Homer (for example where Hector speaks to Andromache in the *Iliad* 6.488 *passim*, and calls war men's business, or at 7.80, where Menelaos addresses the men and calls them women for not leaping to meet Hector's challenge). On the one hand this may be a standard *topos* in literature, but it is nevertheless also a reflection of views held by that society.

<sup>12</sup> For Faustina the Younger, the wife of Marcus Aurelius.

<sup>13</sup> Two 1998 volumes have been edited by FOXHALL AND SALMON: *Thinking men: masculinity and its self-expression in the Classical tradition*, a variety of essays explore the interpretations of the literary and the plastic arts by their male creators as a self-conscious expression of masculinity; *When men were men. Masculinity, power and identity in Classical Antiquity*, in which the contributors look at the male world of self-expression and ambition. The essay by GLEASON (1999) 'Elite male identity in the Roman Empire' in Potter and Mattingly, 67-84 is also illuminating on this point. See also the discussion in DICKIE (2000): 'Who practised love-magic' on the theory that male authors attributed love-magic to women, since it was unmanly for men to resort to such practices.



Men as well as women were therefore confined to their particular gender roles. The role of the ideal Roman *matrona* remained fairly consistent throughout the time of the Roman Empire, but at best it always remained a rather one-dimensional ideal. We see this ideal reflected in funeral epigraphy for daughters, sisters, wives and mothers, from the heart of Rome to the furthest provincial outpost, and these various aspects of the ideal *matrona* and deviations from this norm in the context of Roman Africa are examined in Chapters 4 to 7. The eagerness among some Roman Africans to conform to Roman ideals has allowed scholars writing general works on Roman women to access Roman African material as the equivalent to Roman, but in some cases it is clear that there were also customs, attitudes and types of behaviour which were peculiarly African.<sup>14</sup>

#### **- from public to private**

In the urbanized context with which this study is mostly involved, society or 'the public' has an inevitable effect on the individual private world. Even the organization of domestic space is determined by the needs of society rather than autonomous individual needs.<sup>15</sup> Speaking of the *domus* as the territory of private space would also not be strictly accurate, since a good deal of 'public' activity went on in the house. It was here that guests, clients and others seeking the political or financial favours of the family were received. Since antiquity men, notably in élite families, have used also aspects of private relationships to enhance public status:

*Hinc ad capessendos magistratus in urbem degressus Domitiam Decidianam, splendidis natalibus ortam, sibi iunxit; idque matrimonium ad maiora nitenti decus ac robur fuit. Vixeruntque mira concordia, per mutuam caritatem et in vicem se anteponendo.*

From Britain Agricola returned to Rome to take up office, and married Domitia Decidiana, the child of an illustrious house. It was a union that brought him social distinction and aid to his ambition for advancement. They lived together in rare accord, maintained by mutual affection and unselfishness.... [Agric., 6]

A woman's 'private' or domestic capacities - her chastity, her fertility, her qualities as a good wife - were also made public on gravestones, and proudly displayed for fellow-citizens to pass by and read. Certain aspects of private life therefore became highly idealized, often for public advancement. The African context was no exception to this, and the fact that the private *domus* and a man's public status<sup>16</sup> were linked can be simply illustrated from the following remark made in the court defence of Apuleius:

*Domus eius tota lenonia, tota familia contaminata: ipse propudiosus, uxor lapa, filii similes: prorsus diebus ac noctibus ludibrio iuventutis. Ianua calcibus propulsata, fenestrae canticis circumstrepitae, triclinium comisatoribus inquietum, cubiculum adulteris pervium . . .*

But his house is the dwelling of panders, his whole household foul with sin, ... his house night and day is battered with the kicks of wanton gallants, his windows loud with the sound of loose serenades, his dining-room wild with revel, his bed-chambers the haunt of adulterers. [Apol. 75]

Regardless of the truth of this passage where the individual is concerned, these were clearly issues that touched on his credibility and reputation.<sup>17</sup> In an almost contemporary situation the father of the martyr Perpetua also

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<sup>14</sup> The following viewpoint is unusual among scholars: 'The events took place in Carthage, North Africa. This cosmopolitan city had a long history and a separate tradition from that of Rome. Perpetua inherited cultural memories that were particular to that region, and her martyrdom cannot be understood outside the spaces and values of Carthage.' (Salisbury 1997: 3).

<sup>15</sup> As pointed out by THÉBERT (1987): 'Private life and domestic architecture in Roman Africa', 320-321. Vitruvius [6.5] maintains that there is a direct link between the floor plan of a house and the owner's standing in society. Thébert's work clearly shows that public architecture had a strong influence on private housing to such an extent that it is often difficult to tell some public buildings, for example those used by *collegia*, apart from private houses without the help of inscriptions. Some houses even had their own private *basilica*, always essentially a public building, attached (House/Insula of the Hunt, Bulla Regia) (Thébert 1987: 334-336).

<sup>16</sup> This point is made at greater length by SALLER (1984b): 'Familia, domus and the Roman conception of the family', 349-355.

<sup>17</sup> 'The community judges a man's honor to a significant degree according to the sexual purity of the women to whom he is related',



links family values and public honour when he entreats his daughter to think of her relatives and in particular of the family name in the community, in the hope that this will persuade her to draw back from her goal of martyrdom.

**- from private to public**

Women, on the other hand, used private relationships as a vehicle to public visibility. This link between private and public will become especially clear from Chapter 9 onwards, the chapters which deal with women's activities in the civic life of their cities. Traditionally suitable public activities for Roman women were those which excited little or no negative comment from male authority figures (for example the financial activities of Terentia or the once-in-a-lifetime brave acts of women in Livy (Dickison 1988: 1321). The role of women in the context of euergetism seems to go well beyond this, and the conditions in which this arose, to what extent it was practised and under what circumstances will be the subject of Chapters 10 to 13. Firstly, the conditions which allowed women access to wealth in the Roman African context are examined in Chapter 10, and in Chapter 11 the evidence for their wealth is briefly surveyed. Chapter 13 examines the public role of women in which they disposed of some of this wealth in their communities - women as priestesses, deaconesses and benefactresses.<sup>18</sup> Chapter 13 proposes some solutions as to how Roman African society reconciled the discrepancies between women's role in the public life of the community, for which public accolades were given, and the image of the devoted mothers who were applauded in epitaphs and by Roman authors for the traditional domestic female virtues. The question is whether this is really such an anomaly as has been claimed (Fantham *et al* 1994: 366), or whether this social phenomenon of women's participation in civic life can be explained through the links with religion and family. Lastly one must ask whether the apparent autonomy of women of the propertied status groups is misleading, or whether it represents some real change in gender relations in antiquity.

The Roman African provinces were not alone in this apparent 'double life' or 'double standards' for women, and studies have already been made for other parts of the Empire where the autonomy of women in civic life is noticeable. Investigations by Van Bremen (1983, 1996), MacMullen (1980), Boatwright (1991), Dixon (1983; 1992b), Forbis (1990) and Bremmer (1994) have already treated the issue of status and influence for women either generally or in particular provinces of the Roman Empire. Van Bremen, for example, has collected a large amount of evidence for women occupying expensive priesthoods and secular posts of low authority, and financing temples and other public buildings in the East during the Hellenistic and Roman periods. The material collected in this study presents some interesting contrasts between Eastern and Western practices in how euergetic practices by women were regarded.

By the 4<sup>th</sup> century municipal life had slowed, and the wealth of the cities had moved away to individual estates, or to the centres of power like Rome or Constantinople. The Roman matron's role in municipal life had changed

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according to COHEN (1991): 'The Augustan law on adultery', 112, an attitude typical of Mediterranean societies. VEYNE (1987): *History of private life*, 39-40, refines upon this point by saying that cuckolded husbands did not become a laughing stock, but were criticized for want of vigilance, and to avoid criticism a husband would publicly denounce such misconduct. A husband therefore assumed responsibility for this wife's behaviour. There are many Roman examples of this type: 'How modest she is in her attire, how moderate the number of her attendants, how unassuming when she walks abroad! This is the work of a husband who has fashioned and formed her habits: there is glory enough for a wife in obedience.' [Pliny, *Panegy.* 83, translation B.Radice 1975, Loeb].

<sup>18</sup> Information on women's involvement in benefactions has been appended in tabulated form (Appendix A).

and her influence now shifted from her participation in pagan religions to the new area of power, the Church. A general issue that is much discussed by modern scholars is to what extent, if at all, Christianity changed the social *mores* and whether this affected the position of women. Certainly for the women of Roman Africa Christianity brought about changes, particularly after it increasingly became part of the official power structure from the 4<sup>th</sup> century onwards. Christianity and its effect particularly on the women of Roman Africa is dealt with as a subsection of all the Chapters which follow as a chronological development of the society in which they lived.

Between the two extremes of the patriarchally controlled woman and the autonomous female benefactor there were also women who earned their own living, either in a single career or working together with their husbands or other family members. About these women - doctors, midwives, prostitutes and entertainers, to name but a few - we know very little, but such evidence as we have for the Roman African cities will be dealt with in Chapter 8.

## **THE ANCIENT EVIDENCE**

Clearly the evidence which is available to us today is but a fraction of the whole, and survives by random chance. Written sources in particular tend to provide us with particular views of ideals and norms rather than data on actual behaviour. Both these elements apply to the study of women in Antiquity. Although the evidence on women in Roman Africa is not ample when compared to that of Roman Italy or Rome itself, it is nevertheless of sufficient scope and variety in its literary, epigraphical and iconographical components, to allow reconstruction of a reasonably detailed picture of the role and position of women in Roman Africa. Only since the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century have historians started to combine various types of evidence into single, integrated studies, an enterprise which has to be undertaken with caution since there is always the danger that one particularly abundant source is given inordinate significance. Below the general shortcomings or advantages of the evidence for the purpose of this study are discussed briefly.

### **THE NATURE OF THE SOURCES**<sup>19</sup>

Since the aim is to present as complete a picture of Roman women in Africa as possible, all four types of source material have been taken into account: literary sources, epigraphical material, iconography and archaeology. Each of these has its own limitations and requires its own particular approach, since the evidence does not reach us untouched by the specifications of its genre, for example the slant of ideology or personal motives in construction or commission. But while each type of source presents its own problems, one general handicap is shared by all: the sources from which our picture of women is made up are either male-authored, or dominated by a male value system (for example the language of inscriptions, or artistic representations).<sup>20</sup> It is therefore logical that the 'reality' of women in this society is drawn from the attitude of society towards them, and that this does not tell us a great deal about how women themselves felt about their lives or the issues of their day.

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<sup>19</sup> Translations of the literary excerpts have been taken or adapted from the works cited in the Bibliography. Inscriptions feature the present author's own translation except where otherwise indicated. For the text of the inscriptions and documents referred to here, I have relied on the editors' interpretations of *lacunae*, unintelligible letters and conjectures, and have followed the guidelines of the source cited.

<sup>20</sup> Here Perpetua's text is the exception in claiming a woman author (see below).



Concomitant with this is the fact that, whether literary, epigraphic or iconographic, the sources present the façade of the social norm, even while this may not necessarily be a reflection of social reality. Nowhere is the dichotomy between the social ideal and 'reality' more clearly seen than in the study of men's attitudes to women. Male ideals of female behaviour are clearly discernible, while it becomes increasingly obvious that men very often turned a blind eye to that which was not strictly within the social norms they avow elsewhere. The evidence presents interesting anomalies between law or custom and day-to-day pragmatics, which may bring women's realities somewhat closer.

## I. LITERATURE

Native African societies were pre-literate, and while the Punic inhabitants produced a not inconsiderable amount, nothing of their work has survived.<sup>21</sup> The body of literary evidence for Roman Africa is not a large one when compared with that of Rome, but compares well with that of other provinces such as Gaul or Spain. For the purposes of this investigation there are some difficulties, since some African-born authors spent most of their time as writers in Italy and Rome (e.g. Fronto, Minucius Felix). But there are those authors whom we cannot seriously doubt as writing within the African context. The latter forms the bulk from which evidence about women in Roman Africa has been gathered: primarily the works of Apuleius, Tertullian, Augustine, Cyprian, Optatus of Milevis, Corippus, and Victor of Vita.

Some of our literary evidence comes from authors who were not native Africans and who may have spent only a short time on this continent, for example Herodotus, the geographers Strabo and Pomponius Mela or the historian Procopius. The limitations of this type of evidence can best be illustrated by a typical 'tourist' passage from Pliny the Elder's *Naturalis Historia* relating particularly to the Eastern parts of North Africa:

The Augilae only worship the powers of the lower world. The Gamphasantes go naked, do not engage in battle and hold no intercourse with any foreigner. The Blemmyae<sup>22</sup> reportedly have no heads, since their mouth and eyes are attached to their chests. [5.8.45]

The information about Roman African women given in general histories by writers such as Aurelius Victor, Ammianus Marcellinus and Zosimus have contributed little material to the discussion, since in general these authors mention women either in the context of political marriages and court intrigues, or use women for sentimental touches such as the wailing of women in wartime, or when men are brought to think of wife and family between battles. The same *topoi* are evident in the *Iohannis*, an epic poem of eight books by Corippus, glorifying the campaigns of John Troglita against the Libyans in the years AD 546-9.

Generally caution has to be used in approaching literary evidence: what does the author want to put across as socially acceptable, and what does he reveal to be common social behaviour? The author's intentions within his work towards his intended audience are therefore of primary importance. As Beard (1993: 33) points out 'Ancient literature is not evidence for women's lives in antiquity; it is a series of representations of women by men, and we cannot hope to understand what it is saying unless we reflect on who is speaking, to whom in what context and why.....'. So literary evidence can for example be didactic, rhetorical, fictional or hagiographic,

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<sup>21</sup> Although some works by Punic authors survived the war of 146 BC in libraries which Scipio had donated to the Numidian kings, they disappeared through neglect when Punic fell into disuse as a language of literature (Charles-Picard *et al* 1961: 78).

<sup>22</sup> The Blemmyae referred to here were a tribe from eastern North Africa. PAPADOPOULLOS (1966): *Africanobyzantina*, 8-9, also claims this name for a larger ethnic group of tribes which at least in the time of Justinian was the native population of lower Nubia.



all elements which influence the value of the source and the way in which it is to be treated if it is to yield the maximum of information about the women mentioned within it.

A brief chronological survey of the main literary sources and their usefulness as evidence for women of Roman Africa here will facilitate discussion in the body of the dissertation:

Apuleius of Madaura:

Apuleius was a native of Madaura, half-Numidian, half-Gaetulian, and descended from a reasonably wealthy family, which we can infer from the fact that his father left him half of an estate of 2 million sesterces. His *Apologia* or *Pro se de Magia*, written in the second half of the second century AD, is the most significant literary source for this study.<sup>23</sup> It constitutes the defence of Apuleius in AD 158/9 in Sabratha before the proconsul of Africa Proconsularis, C. Claudius Maximus, against the charge of using magic. The background to this becomes clear from the speech itself. Apuleius had married a widow from Oea by the name of Aemilia Pudentilla (*PIR*<sup>2</sup> A 425). Some of Pudentilla's relatives,<sup>24</sup> however, accused Apuleius of inducing her to marry him through the art of magic and of being more interested in her fortune than was proper. Despite the large amount of information it provides on Pudentilla, it is something of a problematic source, as recognised by Hunink (1997: 12 and 1998). Although the speech invokes an atmosphere of a 'live performance in a busy court' (Hunink 1997: 15), we do not know for certain that this is the exact speech as it was delivered in court,<sup>25</sup> or even if it was delivered, since fictive or practice court speeches are certainly not unknown.<sup>26</sup> Since corroborative evidence for the trial is absent, Hunink points out that this very event may not have taken place at all (1997: 25). But, since the speech is complete, it cannot be proved that the trial did not take place either, and one would assume that at least the events it describes have some real context, since presumably Apuleius would not have manufactured such serious charges against himself in order to refute them as a rhetorical exercise.<sup>27</sup> But whether the court case was a real event or the speech existed on paper only, the text is aimed at defending Apuleius' relationship with Pudentilla and proving his inability to influence her, and consequently any evidence about her independence and strength of mind must be approached with caution. On the other hand, for the purposes of evidence, the speech makes repeated references to the judge (Claudius Maximus), the accusers, the witnesses for and against, and a large audience who had come to watch the proceedings, and whether real or imagined, such an audience presumably would not have been convinced by blatant untruths or impossibilities, despite what Harrison calls Apuleius' 'verbal pyrotechnics' (2000: 76). From the speech it becomes clear that it is not his audience which Apuleius is seeking to convince, but the proconsul Claudius

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<sup>23</sup> Apuleius wrote a number of philosophical works which contain no information relevant to this topic, but which are discussed at some length by HARRISON (2000): *Apuleius. A Latin Sophist*, for example *De Deo Socratis*, *De Platone*, *De Mundo* and a number of fragments which are attributed to him.

<sup>24</sup> Aemilia Pudentilla's relatives were: from a first marriage, Sicinius Pontianus, *splendidissimus eques* [62.3], her eldest son, who died shortly before the court case; Sicinius Pudens, her youngest son, about 18 at the time of the trial; Sicinius Aemilianus, a brother of Pudentilla's first husband; Herrenius Rufus, father-in-law of Pontianus. Tannonius Pudens, who also speaks for Sicinius Pudens together with Aemilianus, is probably not a relative - the name Pudens was quite common in Roman Africa (Harrison 2000: 52 n.30).

<sup>25</sup> Although scholarly opinions vary, it is generally accepted that Apuleius adapted this speech prior to its publication. For more detailed discussion see HUNINK (1997): *Apuleius of Madauros: Pro se de magia*, 1, 25-27.

<sup>26</sup> For example Cicero's Verrine speeches and the *Pro Milone*.

<sup>27</sup> The charges of magic were not the only serious issue at stake, but also the large amount of wealth that the Sicinii family clearly did not want passing out of their hands.



Maximus, with whom the orator forges an élitist link of education and interest, perhaps even that of the philosopher guide, as Bradley has suggested (1997).<sup>28</sup>

Apuleius' novel, the *Metamorphoses* or *Golden Ass* is fictional and therefore even greater caution must be used in studying this material as evidence for social reality.<sup>29</sup> The tale takes place in Greece, but it must be said that the society depicted in it bears greater resemblance to Roman Africa in the second century AD. Graham (1902: 139) finds that the novel reads like 'a satire on the habits of certain classes of African society in the second century'. Admittedly the novel is probably not autobiographical,<sup>30</sup> but it does reflect aspects of social reality, especially in instances where it is clear that the demands of the genre are not being served. Some instances of social reality are fairly self-evident, for example the marriage rituals between Lucius and his Roman bride [11.13-30], which can be shown to reflect current practice. Other instances, such as kidnappings, the daring adventures of lovers and the plots of sorceresses are clearly novelistic elements.

The *Florida* is a collection of extracts from the speeches of Apuleius, some of which were delivered at Carthage [*Flor.* 9, 15, 16, 17, 18], which give little information on contemporary women but some useful facts about the life of some North African cities during this time. Caution is once again advisable and Apuleius' audience and purpose, where known, must be born in mind.

#### **Christian literary sources:**

Sources written by Christians present their own problems for the historian since the material itself is influenced by the author's desire to 'sanctify' or preserve a religious image of a particular individual. Nevertheless these sources do offer some interesting perspectives on the nature of society during Late Antiquity and beyond, since they are inevitably the product of their time. For the purposes of this study it has been necessary to distinguish also when the author is writing prescriptively on Christian ethics for humanity at large, or 'woman', and when they are expressing views about African women and the African Christian context.<sup>31</sup> In this respect it is important for modern readers to remain aware that the authors of these early Christian sources are the products of Graeco-Roman civilization. In his *Apologeticum* [42.1] Tertullian stresses that Christians were present in all areas of Carthaginian life in the traditional apologetic manner: 'We are human beings who live alongside of you, men with the same way of life, the same dress and furniture, the same necessities of life?' Salvian's references to Vandal Carthage are also an indication that pagan and Christian beliefs and practices were not so distinct as the Church Fathers would have liked, since African Christians apparently found it quite normal to sacrifice both to Caelestis and to worship in the Christian church [*De Gub. Dei* 8.2]. But even when Christian authors are conveying information about real women in the Roman African context it must be born in mind that such descriptions are made to conform to a Christian ethical rationale, even if they are not all hagiographical. As such they reflect a particular type or perception of reality.

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<sup>28</sup> For a brief but prudent weighing of the value of the evidence of the *Apologia* see HUNINK (1998) 'The enigmatic lady Pudentilla'.

<sup>29</sup> BROWN (1988): *The body and society*, 14, sees a reflection of the changing role of women in the ancient novel generally.

<sup>30</sup> The autobiographical fallacy: GRIFFITHS (1975): *The Isis book. Metamorphoses*, 7-14, 49. There is no evidence outside inferences drawn from the text that Apuleius himself worshipped Isis or was initiated into her cult.

<sup>31</sup> Much of what Tertullian or Augustine have to say cannot automatically be taken as Church teaching, and even the canons which were in principle binding on the Church in that area were only relevant to the extent in which the population got to hear about it (Clark 1993: 12).

Tertullian: Born at Carthage in the mid second century AD as the son of a centurion, Tertullian grew up as a pagan and trained as a lawyer. Just before the end of the second century he converted to Christianity in Rome and returned to Africa soon after in the 180s or 190s. His subsequent writings earned him the epithet 'that perfevid evangelist' (Baldwin 1975-76). His works in which women feature are numerous, and those works in which his attitude to contemporary women is most discernible (*Ad Uxorem*; *Apologeticum*, *De Cultu Feminarum*; *De Exhortatione Castitatis*; *De Monogamia*; *De Pudicitia*; *De Spectaculis*; *De Virginibus Velandis*) need careful analysis since, after all, for Tertullian women are the 'doorway to the devil' (*diaboli ianua*) [*De Cult. Fem.* 1.1.2]. As Evans-Grubbs (1993: 133) notes, the 'tendentious and often enigmatic character of Tertullian's writing' makes it difficult to separate moral opinion from that which is being commented upon.

Cyprian: Thascius Caecilius Cyprianus (200-258) was a wealthy, well-educated member of the local élite at Carthage who converted to Christianity, and, as a man of stature, soon became Bishop of Carthage. We know something of Cyprian's life from the *Vita* compiled by Pontius which also provides small snippets of information about the social values of this time. Most of Cyprian's own writings deal with the years of persecution under Decius and Valerian in which he also lost his life. His own writings give us some useful details on contemporary society, from the public life of the forum and the arena to private family life, which he describes from both a pagan and a Christian perspective.

*Acts of the Christian Martyrs: Passio SS. Perpetuae et Felicitatis*:

The surviving texts consist of the original Latin as well as a Greek translation, which adds information missing from the original.<sup>32</sup> The work consists of three parts and three styles of composition have been identified - that of the anonymous editor, Saturus and Perpetua.<sup>33</sup> Perpetua has written in rhythmical prose, while the rest is compiled in non-rhythmical prose.<sup>34</sup> This difference in style and possibly language supports the comment by the ancient editor in 2.3, where he states that the account of Perpetua's martyrdom is exactly as she told it herself, written in her own hand (*erat autem ipsa circiter annorum viginti duo. haec ordinem totum martyrii sui iam hinc ipsa narravit sicut conscriptum manu sua et suo sensu reliquit*).

If the original editor of the *Passio* can be believed<sup>35</sup> that Perpetua's portion of the text was written by her own hand, it is the only text in this study which can claim a woman as its author. Despite being written in a world dominated by a male value system, it betrays its authorship by certain feminine preoccupations, for example with breastfeeding and her concerns with her own body.<sup>36</sup> The document is of interest to gender scholars for

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<sup>32</sup> I have followed the position taken by SHAW (1993): 'The passion of Perpetua', 3 n.2, that the Latin text is the original and the Greek a 'close version' translation.

<sup>33</sup> McKECHNIE (1994): 'St Perpetua and Roman education in AD 200', 281, sums up the conclusions of the work by Åke Fridh, *Le problème de la Passion des saintes Perpétue et Félicité* (1968) in this regard, in essence repeated here.

<sup>34</sup> McKechnie (1984: 281) suggests because of the non-rhythmical prose style that the section written by Saturus may have been composed in Greek, thus predating the elder of the two extant texts.

<sup>35</sup> Despite some discussion on this point there seems to be no reason not to believe this testimony. See discussion in McKechnie (1994: 279-281).

<sup>36</sup> Studies have been made on the style of the section written by Perpetua (Fridh quoted by McKechnie, see note 33 above), which differs from that of the general author, and certain aspects such as Perpetua's focus on her baby and breastfeeding, her relationship with her father make it an identifiable female-authored text.



another reason: by the 4<sup>th</sup> century the text and the festival day in honour of the martyrs focused on the deaths of the two women victims rather than on their four male companions. The normal social order is reversed in the leadership of the women over the men. This was clearly troublesome to later teachers of Church doctrine. One unidentified 4<sup>th</sup> century writer rewrote a shorter version of the martyrdom (Shaw 1993: 35) in which the women are questioned separately from the men, and husbands are mentioned for both Perpetua and Felicitas where these are not mentioned at all in the original. In this version Perpetua's husband is also present with her family when she is tried, placing her within the more conventional family role. Perpetua's rejection of her family and child is here furthermore subtly altered by the fact that she calls them 'evil'. All in all this account certainly makes the women lose some of their popular appeal as role models, and thus, as Salisbury points out (1997: 172), less of an undermining influence on the social order. Augustine's references to the martyrdom of the women is also influenced by the time and culture within which he found himself. Augustine wrote several sermons on the deaths of Perpetua and Felicitas, on the one hand praising their sacrifice in giving up their families and their children to follow Christ [*Serm.* 281], since this is after all what the New Testament preaches, but on the other hand playing down their central leadership role in the martyrdom, by, for example, juxtaposing it with the role of Eve in the downfall of mankind.

The actual purpose of the author is of importance in establishing its exact value as evidence. The *Passio* refers to the author's 'mandate' or 'sacred trust' (*mandatum... fideicommissum*) which implies that Perpetua intended to have her words read out loud at the commemoration of her martyrdom.<sup>37</sup> Evidence for such memorial services dates to about fifty years earlier<sup>38</sup>, and Augustine [*Serm.* 280] actually mentions that his congregation had heard Perpetua's account. Perpetua's account may therefore have been written with a live audience in mind, and it is for this reason that the text was preserved.

#### *Life of Melania the Younger:*

This text, written in about 452 by Gerontius, a deacon at Melania's monastery in Jerusalem, survives in both a Greek and a Latin version based on the original text of Gerontius,<sup>39</sup> and provides interesting information about Melania, a woman of senatorial rank, who with members of her family retired to their African estates as a result of the Gothic sack of Rome in 410 for a period of seven years.<sup>40</sup> Certain hagiographic elements in the text are clearly designed to emphasize Melania's Christian devotion and ascetism and needs to be understood in this context. Melania's life is used as evidence in this study for her involvement in the Christian African Church, but always bearing in mind that her role and relationship with the local population was not a normal one, since her illustrious lineage may have placed a barrier between them.

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<sup>37</sup> McKechnie's argument (1994: 279) seems more plausible here than that of LANE FOX (1987): *Pagans and Christians*, 401, who refers to Perpetua's testimony as a 'prison diary', as does DODDS (1965): *Pagans and Christians in an age of anxiety*, 48, 'a sort of prison diary'.

<sup>38</sup> Eusebius, *Hist. Eccles.* 4.15.43-4.

<sup>39</sup> There appears to be some dispute as to whether the original text was in Greek or Latin. The details of the debate are discussed in CLARK (1984): *The Life of Melania the Younger*, 4-13.

<sup>40</sup> Melania the Younger was the daughter of Valerius Publicola and Albina, the daughter of Ceionius Rufius Albinus, the prefect of Rome in 389-391 (*PLRE* 1: 1138). Melania was also the granddaughter of Melania the Elder of the *gens Antonia*, who had married Valerius Maximus, probably the praetorian prefect in the 360s (*PLRE* 1: 592). A more detailed discussion of Melania's ancestry and family can be found in Clark's edition of Melania's life (1984: 83-91).

Augustine: Born in AD 354, Augustine was a native of the Libyan city of Thagaste and he was almost certainly of Libyan stock. The name of his mother Monica or Monnica is a derivation of the name of the Libyan god Mon [CIL 14911; 17798]. In addition to Augustine's own writings, Possidius' *Vita Augustini* has also provided some evidence about Augustine and his time. Augustine was a true African, and his writings show that 'much of his thinking was centred on Africa' (Ferguson 1969:184). He feels sympathy for African Dido rather than for the hero of Roman ideals, Aeneas [*Conf.* 1.13.20]<sup>41</sup> in a situation which Brown (1967: 23) describes as 'a very African interlude in the life of the upright founder of Rome'; he takes Maurus to task for his lack of understanding of his native country, and he reminds Maximus that they are both 'African, writing for Africans, living in Africa' (*.. ut homo Afer scribens Afris, cum simis utrique in Africa consituti*) [*Ep.* 17.2]. Starting out as a schoolteacher, he was converted to Christianity, and travelled to Milan in 382/3, but he abandoned his ambitions of a wealthy marriage and a public career and returned to his portion of the family estates in Thagaste in 388.<sup>42</sup> He became Bishop of Hippo Regius in 395, and wrote the *Confessiones*, a biography of the evolution of his heart. As in the case of most of his writing, this work contains much valuable information on the society in which he found himself, and in particular on his mother Monica and her marriage to his father (Book 9 in particular). For the depiction of Monica a cautious note is struck by Brown (1967: 29): 'Occasionally, we glimpse a genuinely impressive woman - very much what her son would have liked himself to be, as a bishop...'. Monica is painted as Augustine wanted us to see her - and himself! Since Augustine's work is often autobiographical in its own particular style, it provides an extra dimension through his fascination with precise human feelings and emotions and with the psychology of human life. His attitude to women generally can at best be said to be conservative and patriarchal.<sup>43</sup>

#### Victor Vitensis:

In his history of the Vandal invasion of North Africa written in the 480s, the author identifies himself as *sancto Victore episcopo patriae Vitensi*. Victor was a devout supporter of the Orthodox Christians against the Arian heresy upheld by the Vandals and his work alternates between the horrors perpetrated by the Vandals during the persecutions of Geiseric and Huneric and the heroic sacrifices made by men and women of Roman Africa.<sup>44</sup> From other sources it would appear that the situation was not quite as extreme as Victor would have us believe. Generally then, the work is highly polemical, and as a source for women in Africa the information is best dealt with as a hagiographic context.

#### Luxorius and contemporary poets:

A number of poems from the period of the Vandal occupation are collected in the *Anthologia Latina*, attributed to about ten poets who wrote at Carthage at the turn of the sixth century. All the poets appear to belong to the

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<sup>41</sup> It is also an African poet who composes the love letters of Dido, *Epistulae Didonis ad Aeneam* (Baehrens, *Poetae Latini Minores* 4, pp.271-277 (Leipzig: Teubner, 1879). See also Apuleius' restoration of Dido's reputation in the analysis by FINKELPEARL (1998: *Metamorphosis of language in Apuleius*, 115 and n.2) of Charite's tale as an 'alternate Dido story' and her references to a tradition among African writers to restore Dido's reputation.

<sup>42</sup> See also the chronology for Augustine's life in Appendix B.

<sup>43</sup> A good analysis on Augustine's attitude to women can be found in POWER (1995): *Veiled desire: Augustine's writing on women*.

<sup>44</sup> The work has been interpreted as an appeal for help from the Byzantine authorities against the Vandal persecutors (Courtois 1954: 18-22).



municipal aristocracy (Clover 1982a: 20-22), and the most prominent sample is by Luxorius, *vir clarissimus et spectabilis*, consisting of 91 epigrams (Rosenblum 1961: 49).<sup>45</sup> The material presents some difficulties since although it is quite informative about some aspects of African society under Vandal rule, the poet's chief interest is in those aspects which he finds amusing or bizarre enough for comment and his epigrams contain much satirical hyperbole.

#### Salvian:

The author of *De Gubernatione Dei*, written between 439 and 451, is clearly a champion of Vandal morality and a severe critic of what he feels to be the comparative lax behaviour of the rest of the Roman world, most particularly the African Romans, whom he claims are worse than anyone else [7.13-16]. It does not appear that Salvian, who was a Gaul, had an in depth knowledge of either Vandal or Roman African culture, although some of his evidence can be corroborated by other sources. It is more likely that he relied on the information of African exiles whom he may have known (Cleland 1970: 272).

#### **Literary sources from the Byzantine period:**

Investigating references to North Africa in Byzantine works gave limited results for the purposes of this study. Such sources as we have are largely male-orientated (for example the *Lausiaca History* of Palladius) or devoted to geographic or military details (Cosmas Indicopleustes and Procopius), revealing little about gender relations of the time. In the first half of the 7<sup>th</sup> century there was what Cameron (1982: 53) calls 'vigorous intellectual activity' in Africa in which the principal figures were Maximus Confessor and Sophronius, both writing in Greek. The two authors whose works have yielded the most for the purpose of this study are however from the earlier period, namely Procopius and Corippus.

#### Procopius:

Two books of Procopius' *Wars* deal with the campaign against the Vandals under Belisarius (*De Bello Vandalico*), when Procopius accompanied the general and before he had 'felt the disillusion that set in in the 540s' (Cameron 1985: 171) and was still an admirer of Justinian's ambitions. A section on Africa is also included in his *De Aedificiis*, where he dwells briefly on the Libyans or on the inhabitants of Hadrumetum. Unfortunately Procopius' observations on Africa are of limited value. He is not too particular in distinguishing the various ethnicities of Libyan and Punic,<sup>46</sup> and although he relates a few local anecdotal (and unverifiable) details, his main concern is the military campaign. Like Corippus discussed below, he minimizes the effects of Byzantine occupation on the local inhabitants. Procopius provides general information about the local peoples and no Roman African women (and only one or two men) are mentioned by name or individualized in

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<sup>45</sup> I have followed Rosenblum's numbering of the poems in this text.

<sup>46</sup> In *De Aedificiis* [6.3.9] he says that the Moors are a Phoenician race (Μαυρούσιοι... Φοινικικὸν ἔθνος). CAMERON (1985): *Procopius and the sixth century*, 184-5, further comments: '...it is assumed [by Procopius] that the fortifications were all built 'against' the Berbers, so that they would not 'overrun' Roman territory. Thus Procopius operates even here with a simple opposition between the Roman or rather sub-Roman population of the towns and the barbarian Berbers. ... Procopius uses the opposing terms 'Libyans' and 'Moors'. He assumes a rigid demarcation between the two groups and implies, though without discussion, that Byzantine territory was to be marked off by fortifications which would divide Roman from Berber'.

any way. His views on women, few as they are, follow the typical ancient historiographer's misogyny.<sup>47</sup>

#### Corippus:

There is much speculation about Corippus, and even his own statement in the preface that he was a *grammaticus* is open to interpretation.<sup>48</sup> On conditions in Africa during the sixth century Corippus is not the most reliable source, since although the effects of increased warfare and the heavy taxation imposed by Justinian on the African territories must have made themselves felt at this time, this is not evident from Corippus' work and hence 'his defence of the Byzantine cause can only be an attempt to persuade his fellow-Africans of the blessing of a régime which they now doubted profoundly' (Cameron 1985: 178). Corippus only on one occasion speaks of happier times under Vandal rule [*Ioh.* 3.195-6]. His attitude towards the native Libyans seems to have been supercilious (Cameron 1982: 39ff) and he describes mainly those of the western parts which was the area of concern for the Byzantine emperor.

#### **Medical texts from pagan Rome to Byzantium:**

The only medical texts originating in Africa are the treatises of Caelius Aurelianus from Sicca Veneria (fl. AD 420), the *Gynaecia* of Vindicianus and the 11<sup>th</sup> century *De Ginecia* and *De Ginetalis Membris* of Constantinus Africanus,<sup>49</sup> although none of these make any points that are unique either to medicine or to the continent. Caelius Aurelianus' *Celerum Passionum* and *Tardarum Passionum* are in effect loose translations into Latin of Soranus' Greek text. These and the more generally known medical texts of Soranus and Galen are used only in particular instances to illustrate general medical beliefs about women's conditions, for example midwifery, health and pregnancy. Although generally most of the medical writers were of eastern origin (some spent time in Rome), they give information about views which were probably generally held among doctors in most Romanized societies, since many of their opinions are upheld or reflected in the work of the African medical writers.<sup>50</sup>

## **II. EPIGRAPHY**

This large body of material is invaluable for an understanding of Roman African society, but generally it has a number of limitations. In the first place 'stone inscriptions do not give us information about the total population of an area. They merely tell us something about the people who used stone inscriptions' (Mann 1985: 205). This restricts us once again to the Romanized status group. In addition epigraphic material tends to reflect a particular artificial situation, i.e. the ideal as opposed to the reality, expressed in a particular style

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<sup>47</sup> Procopius clearly enjoyed the rhetorical tradition on wicked women: 'If one wanted to attack a woman, even an empress [Theodora], the way to do it was through her private life. But such criticism - which allowed a misogynist like Procopius to vent all his dislike and distrust of women on to this useful scapegoat - is neither serious criticism nor serious description' (Cameron 1985: 75). The *Anekdotai* or *Secret History* of Procopius, although offering many interesting avenues of exploration on the author's attitude to women and Theodora in particular, contains no evidence on women in Africa.

<sup>48</sup> The evidence on the life of Corippus allows for different interpretations - see BALDWIN (1978a): 'The career of Corippus' on the interpretation by Averil and Alan Cameron.

<sup>49</sup> This work already demonstrates a good deal of Arabic influence - GREEN (1987): 'The *De ginecia* attributed to Constantin the African'.

<sup>50</sup> Soranus was from Ephesus and Galen and Oribasius (AD 320-400) from Pergamum. Aetius of Amida (6<sup>th</sup> century) was another famous doctor in later times. For the use of medical texts as a source for women's history, see KING (1995): 'Medical texts as a source for women's history', who takes a sceptical attitude to the 'authorial ego' of the male authors of such texts.



and language which is therefore formulaic. The formulae can also, however, have meaning when related to general values, even if they have none for the individual. If all Roman women were perhaps not the modest, chaste and faithful wives and daughters of the inscriptions, this is clearly what Roman men wanted them to be. These ideal values can also for example tell us something about the extent of Romanization, for the same ideals of womanhood can be found across the Empire. Commemorative inscriptions have also been used to determine patterns of intermarriage between Roman and non-Roman populations in the onomastic study done by Cherry (1998) as a key to Romanization of the area today known as Algeria.<sup>51</sup> In this regard inscriptions have other limitations already intimated by Mann above, since what we have today remains by accident and not by design, and conclusions are often drawn on the basis of imperfect evidence, not least being the fact that women are under-represented in epigraphy (Lassère 1977: 474). Nevertheless, bearing all these limitations in mind, inscriptions have the advantage of often surviving in large quantities of examples, where there is 'safety only in numbers: *many* facts, of which one may be wrong without destroying the argument' (MacMullen 1990: 12). Another problem, the lack of precise dating, is not as great as one might think, since the inscriptions fall more or less into the first three centuries AD, a time when society experienced relatively few changes with regard to the ideal image of women. From a collection of the inscriptions mentioning women one can soon separate that which is formulaic from that which is not. With the former we are well provided, and the ideals held up by Roman African society emerge clearly (Chapter 7). From the latter one can learn something about how the Romans valued individual relationships (discussed in Chapter 5). Honorary inscriptions - a far smaller number than epitaphs - reveal how formulae used for men can also be transferred to women. The division between public and private in the majority of cases reflects status, since information about private life and relationships is often derived from lower status groups, while honorary inscriptions are more commonly from the élite. Epigraphic material has both male and female authorship, but reveals that in general Roman women were seen and saw themselves in the light of their relationships with men, usually members of their own family.

A fairly substantial number of inscriptions provide evidence on women in the Romanized societies of North Africa, in particular during the first three centuries AD. Besides those referred to or quoted here there are of course many more which mention a huge number of anonymous women about whom we shall in all likelihood never know anything more than that they lived and died.

#### **- funerary inscriptions**

Of the thousands of African inscriptions commemorating the life and death of women some are too brief to be informative for our purposes. Brevity such as in the following example can be taken as evidence of lower economic status unless there are indications to the contrary:

D(IS) M(ANIBUS) S(ACRUM) | GEMINIA | OPTATA VIX(IT) | ANN(OS) XVIII  
Consecrated to the souls of the departed. Geminia Optata lived 19 years

[CIL 8565]

Only 103 funerary inscriptions have been used in this study as informative examples giving actual testimony of private life: private relationships between husbands and wives, mothers and sons, fathers and daughters. In another sense, as discussed above, they are not private, since they were erected as public testimony of these

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<sup>51</sup> Admittedly such information used in isolation can give a skewed picture, as commented in Mattingly's review of this book (*Classical Review*, 2000 vol. 50.2, 543-545).

relationships to be read by passers by. Thus they tell us more about how the bereaved person(s) wanted their relationship to the deceased to be seen than about their actual relationship. Adjectives tend to fall into the superlative in a society used to strong rhetorical language, and that a *matrona* like Domitia Caesia [CIL 134] should be called a *pudicissima femina, rarissimae frugalitatis et indulgentissima matrona* is not particularly unusual. Nevertheless there are examples which do deviate from the standard funerary norm, and one would like to think that they reveal some genuine feeling, despite the use of conventional poetic imagery:

HAÏDRA (AMMAEDARA)

[CIL 434 = 11518 & P.2359; CLE 480; IL 7426]

HIC SITUS EST VARIUS COGNOMINE FRONTINIANUS | QUEM CONIUNX LEPIDA POSUIT CORNELIA GALLA |  
DULCIA RESTITUENS VETERIS SOLACIA VITAE | MARMOREOS VOLTUS STATUIS OCULOS ANIMUMQUE |  
LONGIUS UT KARA POSSET SATURARE FIGURA | HOC SOLAMEN ERIT VISUS NAME PIGNUS AMORIS | PECTORE  
CONTEGITUR MEMOR[I] DULCEDINE MENTIS | NEC POTERIT FACILI LABIUM OBLIVIONE PERIRE | SET DUM USTA  
MANET TOT EST IN CORDE MARITUS | NEC MIR(UM) QUONIAM TALES QUAE FEMINA MORES

Here lies Varius Frontinianus, whom his charming wife Cornelia Galla laid to rest. In an attempt to recall for her consolation the gentleness of a past life, she has given him a marble face, so that this dear image may long satisfy her eyes and her soul. This will be a consolation, a gentle souvenir, the proof of love which hides in a heart, and cannot die by an easy forgetfulness of the lips. The ashes of my husband here fill my whole heart. Nor (is it) a wonder for such are the customs of a woman . . .

#### **- honorary inscriptions**

Honorary inscriptions record that some wealthy women donated money for the construction or upkeep of buildings, for games and banquets, and a further small number honour particular women for these benefactions. Some women in Italy, the Near East and Africa were even granted the status of civic patrons,<sup>52</sup> but what rights or privileges this gave to women (since the *Digest* tells us that women could not hold civil offices [5.1.12.2]) clearly needs further investigation. Collectively these inscriptions supply information about the level of participation of women from the urban élites in the cultural and economic life of their cities, and hence about their social position. Were they just the mothers, wives and daughters of municipal and imperial officials and were their titles such as *flaminica perpetua* or *patrona civitatis* empty honours? These inscriptions will be examined in this study with a view to establishing the value of the cultural and economic role of these wealthy ladies, the significance of their contribution, and how it was viewed by their contemporaries.

#### **- other inscriptions**

Since this study focused on the Roman provinces west of Cyrenaica, no Greek inscriptions were found to contribute to the topic. The number of Punic and Neo-Punic (the later form of the Carthaginian language as it had developed after the Roman conquest) inscriptions for the period under discussion is not large, but is collected in the *Corpus Inscriptionum Semiticarum*, *Recueil des inscriptions libyques* as well as some examples in *Inscriptions of Roman Tripolitania*, and *Inscriptions antiques du Maroc*. Only those available in translation have been referred to in this study. Inscriptions in the Libyan alphabet have not been used in this study as they 'reveal no more than proper names and a few formulae' (Millar 1968: 128) and therefore contributed little to the evidence on women. The texts are collected in the *Recueil des inscriptions libyques*.<sup>53</sup>

<sup>52</sup> In Egypt one woman is given the title 'father of the city', a good example of how intrinsically this area was traditionally dominated by men (Sijpestein 1987: 141-142).

<sup>53</sup> For further discussion see BÉNABOU (1976a): *La résistance africaine à la romanisation*, 473-483.



### III. OTHER WRITTEN EVIDENCE <sup>54</sup>

Although legal texts have been much used in social history, they do not, as Gardner (1986a:1-3) points out, describe how people think or behave - they give people an option to behave in a certain way or not. Furthermore, while the laws are usually clear enough in themselves, it is often difficult to establish whether or not they were enforced and whether individual citizens were even aware or took advantage of their legal position. Records of the application of the law are furthermore often explicit on the legal status of the person concerned (whether freeborn, freed or slave), but fail to distinguish between the variety of economic levels on which such a person would function - a wealthy freedwoman's lifestyle and status would certainly differ from that of a poor freedwoman. Nor do the legal sources dwell on the type of society from which this person might come, city or country, Romanized or local. To further complicate the legal evidence regional tribal laws and Punic law were also in operation in North Africa during the Roman period. References to the main collections of legal texts, the *Codex Theodosianus*, the *Codex Iustinianus* and the *Digesta*, have been used where they refer to women in the Roman African context or where they shed light on the evidence from Roman Africa.

*Tabellae defixionum*, or the inscriptions (usually on metal) expressing a desire to 'enlist supernatural aid in bringing other persons . . . under the control of the person who commissioned or personally inscribed the tablet' (Gager 1992: 3), are an interesting source of information in an area where women also actively participated and which can consequently tell us something about women's wishes and desires, even if the texts are largely formulaic.

Archival records are the last group of written documents, the single example in this geographical context being the *Tablettes Albertini* found at Bir Trough (100 km south of Theveste) consisting of thirty-five tablets in different hands (ink on unpolished wood) relating to the property and transactions of a group of *coloni* on the *fundus Tuletianos*. Most probably the tablets were part of the estate archives (Mattingly 1989: 404). These contribute some valuable evidence on women for the years ca. AD 493-496 (the dates are indicated by the Vandal rulers mentioned in the documents).

### IV. ARCHAEOLOGY

Archaeological remains differ in one respect from the other sources in that they confront us directly with uninterpreted evidence, where the written evidence already incorporates the author's interpretation. The result of this is, perhaps unfortunately, that the latter is used to interpret the former, and, as with the iconographical material, archaeological evidence serves more as corroboration than as material positing theories of domestic life on its own. When this does not occur, as Humphrey (1980: 85) comments on the excavations of Carthage, the situation remains confusing.<sup>55</sup> 'In my view, archaeological knowledge has all the relative merits and restrictions of long-range social history', says Shaw, 'It can tell us much about the structure of the material world, as is indeed reflected in most archaeological jargon: 'types, spectra, distributions, clusters, settlement patterns' and so on. This path leads from the artefact to a sort of 'sociology' ... But the specific short-term causes and events that are an integral part of history, and the ideological and material interactions within human

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<sup>54</sup> Inscriptions found in *Monte Testaccio* or on lead pipes do not give additional testimony to women's ownership of property or trade interests in Roman Africa.

<sup>55</sup> According to HUMPHREY (1980): 'Vandal and Byzantine Carthage', the archaeological and literary evidence for the Vandal/Byzantine period run parallel 'but rarely overlap or complement each other with great clarity or precision'.



communities that produced commensurable artefacts remain beyond the reach of archaeology.' (Shaw 1980: 47). An interesting approach is taken by Dunbabin in her work on Roman art, since she does not only describe domestic space, but uses her findings as a basis for inferring the most probable activities which took place there (for example Dunbabin 1998: 81-101).

There is still much ongoing archaeological activity in Roman Africa since many African settlements and estates have still to be excavated and publications on the subject always lag behind the status of the site.<sup>56</sup> For the purposes of getting a clearer picture about the private life of the Roman household, work relating for example to urbanization and in particular to domestic housing and villas has proved useful.<sup>57</sup> Once again, however, ruins of ancient buildings tell us more about the wealthy urban élite who lived in substantial and well-built houses and left behind their public structures than it tells us about the urban poor. The evidence of the residential houses of Roman Africans does not indicate that any portion was devoted to the activities of either gender, although there is a possible exception that will be discussed below.

Finally one advantage of archaeology, of which substantial use has been made by scholars such as Duncan-Jones, is that it can be used to illuminate dedicatory inscriptions by showing when key monuments were constructed, altered and repaired and in determining materials and costs.

## **V. ICONOGRAPHY**

Iconographical material proved to be something of a problem, since these artifacts, although they often reside in the many modern museums, are often unpublished and not always accessible. An additional problem is the fact that, while images of women are relatively abundant in Roman Africa - mosaics, statues, reliefs - most of this material depicts goddesses, and there are very few real women.<sup>58</sup> A fair percentage of the iconographical material reflects local or pre-Roman artistic traditions, although these are seldom erected by members of the local élite and tend to be cruder in materials and execution. Most of the evidence reproduced here shows clearly where there is local or Roman influence.<sup>59</sup>

There are many generic and iconographic traditions as well as gender assumptions which are involved in the assessment of iconography as evidence for the status and position of women, which also had to be taken into account in the Roman African context. Generally images tend to idealize or romanticize reality, but some examples run counter to this tradition and show a startling 'warts-and-all' realism. Reality is sometimes also

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<sup>56</sup> On this subject and for an overview of the latest literature, see THÉBERT (1987): 'Private life and domestic architecture in Roman Africa'; also HURST (1984): *Excavations at Carthage*; DIETZ ET AL (1995): *Africa Proconsularis: regional studies in the Segermes Valley*; GROSLAMBERT (1997): *L'archéologie algérienne de 1895 à 1915*. Excavations are usually of limited scope and the publication of findings often incomplete for work which is still in progress.

<sup>57</sup> On urbanisation, see LASSUS (1965): 'Adaption à l'Afrique de l'urbanisme romain', 245-249; on domestic architecture in Roman Africa: REBUFFAT (1969): 'Maisons à péristyle d'Afrique du Nord', 659-742; and (1970): *Thamusida II* and (1974): 'Maisons à péristyle d'Afrique du Nord', 445-499, and THÉBERT (1987): 'Private life and domestic architecture in Roman Africa', 319-409. See also the criticism by CHERRY (1998): *Frontier and society in Roman North Africa*, ix., that archaeology has done little to illuminate the structures of indigenous society or economy since their focus is on urbanised and settled areas.

<sup>58</sup> For this problem and possible solutions, see KAMPEN (1991): 'Between public and private. Women as historical subjects in Roman art', 218-248.

<sup>59</sup> GERGEL (1994): 'Costume as geographic indicator: barbarians and prisoners on cuirassed statue breastplates', 191 notes that on cuirassed statue breastplates costume is portrayed with enough detail to enable the viewer to recognise the national origin of the barbarians and captives depicted.



obscured for lower status groups, since there is for example often no clear differentiation between free working women and slaves.

Since no female images have come to light which would stimulate a different direction of enquiry or offer a basis for a new theory, iconography has been used in this study mainly as corroborative evidence, for example in examining the impact of official art on local representations of women, or of the following of imperial fashions, themes and trends in the local context, in the study of women in the Romanization process.

### **Public art**

The purpose of this type of art often depicts women as representatives of the family context and the legitimacy of the family line, symbolizing a sound basis for the well-being of the empire as a whole. This is no doubt the purpose of the depictions of the Septimii Severi family in Africa, since Roman emperors had a strong motive for advertising their links in times when military attempts to overthrow the throne were common. 'My hypothesis is that women's images were used on public historical reliefs because they were uniquely recognizable signs of the private world. Set into a public context and noticeable precisely because of their rarity, women's images carried special meaning about the ideal and idealized relationship between public and private...' (Kampen 1991: 219). Besides the reliefs and statues of the imperial household of which there are many examples in Africa, others depicted individual Roman African women, either in an honorary capacity or as a reflection of the family's position in the town for the same purpose as that attributed to the imperial families, although in a local context. The more expensive or better executed of these are sculpted in the style of Hellenistic models and use the imagery of divinities, for example the use of diadems, cornucopia, and so on, with placid and idealised faces.

Relatively little evidence of Christian art has come to light, given the strong voice of the early Christian writers from this part of the world, and only one Christian mosaic of a woman has come to light. This curious anomaly will be discussed further below.

### **Funerary stelae**

Also on private tombstones, women and children symbolized legitimacy and prosperity. In funerary portraiture, for example, couples are often represented in the marital gesture of *dextrarum iunctio* (clasping right hands), symbolizing the legitimacy of the marriage and pride in its harmonious nature, which was never taken for granted (Veyne 1987: 40-45). Iconography is often an indication of the aspirations of lower status groups. Freedmen indicated their desire for upward mobility by public representation of their families, something to which only a free person who could acknowledge his children as his own, was entitled, and which therefore signalled legitimacy and social status.

Gender identity is sometimes indicated by specific instruments on funerary reliefs and also on mosaics. The man's identity is usually indicated by his level of education (a scroll), his occupation (tools) or the activities of the wealthy (such as hunting), the woman's by items of the beauty cult or domestic items. This is very much the case in the evidence of Roman Africa, although some representations of women in this context give rise to

interesting alternative interpretations.<sup>60</sup> In the frescoes of the tomb of Gargáresh the Roman African provinces yield one unique example of crossover ideology (e.g. symbols of female literacy or education) which will be discussed in full later. Women were also often associated with typically Roman deities such as Venus, Ceres or Diana, i.e. the virtues of love and beauty, fertility or virginity and courage, as opposed to the male representations of Mars (war), Hercules (strength) and Mercury (money-making) (Fantham *et al* 1994:370).

### **Mosaics and frescoes**

Roman African mosaics are evident from the end of the 1<sup>st</sup> century AD, but generally stem from the period of Late Antiquity, the finest examples dating from the early 4<sup>th</sup> century, a time when the rich had become richer, particularly after the economic reforms of Diocletian. A great many African mosaics reflect a local focus on agriculture, for example the Four Seasons or associated farming activities. Some depict scenes of the pursuits of the prosperous status group, with an emphasis on wealth and status (for example in dress), and hunting scenes were popular (women in Roman society were excluded from hunting). Nilotic scenes are also common, featuring exotic beasts, pygmies and lush Nile vegetation, although these are clearly not meant to be realistic portraits of daily African life, being highly artificial in subject and stilted in style. Portraits of female icons of the Christian Church such as Monica or Perpetua typically reflect no identifiable features of the individual.

For the most part iconography has served to restrict women to their domestic role, but one exception to this is the single wall painting which has been used in this study, found in a tomb erected for Aelia Arisuth and Aelius Magnus in the 4<sup>th</sup> century AD. The wall painting offers many possibilities for interpretation which will be discussed under the appropriate chapters.

The Roman African evidence has proved to be varied and sometimes even contradictory, particularly on the influence of pre-Roman cultures on the position of women in Roman Africa. Africa and Rome provided a unique and fascinating cultural combination of which many avenues still deserve to be explored.

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<sup>60</sup> See for example the interpretation by VEYNE (1981): 'Les cadeaux des colons à leur propriétaire', 245-252, of the Julius mosaic discussed here on p. 248.





## CHAPTER 2

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### NORTH AFRICA

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The purpose of this chapter is introductory, to sketch briefly the social and political milieu in which Roman African women will be examined. Its purpose is also to establish certain definitions pertaining to this thesis, since there are a number of key concepts which are variously interpreted by modern scholars. The term 'Roman Africa', for example, is understood by some French scholars to mean the French 'Afrique du Nord', their former colonies on the Mediterranean (Abun-Nasr 1971: 1), whereas Anglo-American scholars understand it to be the equivalent of the area defined by the Arabic word Maghreb or 'land of the sunset'. Geographical definitions, period and the main aspects of Roman African society will all be set out in this chapter.

#### DEFINITION OF ROMAN NORTH AFRICA

For the earlier Greek and Roman writers Africa was considered to be on the periphery of the known world, and the further from the Mediterranean coast the more mystical and fantastical the continent became in their descriptions. However that part of Africa bordering on the Mediterranean Sea increasingly became an active participant in the Graeco-Roman world, and Greek and Latin literature which makes mention of the northern African continent is not particularly rare. A literary stereotyping of Africa emerges with most authors, some of whom (to our knowledge) never visited the continent.<sup>1</sup> Africa was famed for its fertility [for example, Hdt.4.199; Strabo 1.1.16 and 2.5.33; Diod. Sic. 3.50; Ennius, *Sat.* 17] and indeed Rome for much of her history imported large quantities of grain from Africa. It was also a fertile land in the sense of being a seemingly endless source of wild beasts.<sup>2</sup> Its deserts were equally well known to ancient authors. Manilius contrasts its fertility (*fecunda*) with its sterility (*sterili*) [*Astron.* 4.667-669], and Strabo quotes the African proconsul Gnaeus Piso when he says that Libya is like (the skin of) a leopard (ἐίουκυῖα παρδαλῆ), spotted with inhabited places surrounded by a waterless and desert land [2.5.33].

Ancient Greek authors referred to portions of the northern parts of the continent of Africa sometimes as 'Libya',

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<sup>1</sup> See MARITZ (2000): 'The Classical image of Africa', 81-99, on Claudian's portrayal of Africa, for example.

<sup>2</sup> Africa as the source of wild beasts: for example Herodotus [2.32]; Pliny [*NH* 5.1.9]; Sallust [*Bell. Jug.* 7.6]. See also GSELL (1913-1928): *Histoire ancienne de l'Afrique du Nord*, Vol. I, 108 *passim*.

sometimes as 'Africa',<sup>3</sup> even though these terms were not always geographically or politically consistent.<sup>4</sup> As to the borders of what the ancients considered to be North Africa, here they are in agreement. Herodotus was the first to make the distinction between the civilization of the Nile and the more western regions of North Africa [2.16-17; 4.41-45]<sup>5</sup>, and since then North Africa in antiquity is generally taken to exclude the territory of Egypt.<sup>6</sup> In essence the desertification of the land cut North Africa off from the rest of the continent but for the narrow strip of Tripolitania. The western border of the continent was formed naturally by the Atlantic Ocean [Hdt. 2.32; 4.196]. The Atlas mountains in the South separated North Africa from the Sahara desert beyond, in the same way that the Mediterranean Sea formed a natural boundary along its northern edge. Although the Greeks and the Romans had contact with the Nubians and Aethiopians, they did not form part of the territory which scholars have come to understand as 'Roman North Africa', as their territories lay further South, geographically defined as ancient East Africa.

## THE ROMAN PROVINCES

For the purposes of this study Roman Africa can therefore be defined as: Africa Proconsularis (formerly Africa, Africa Vetus and Africa Nova), including the coastal stretch known as Tripolitania,<sup>7</sup> Numidia, Mauretania Caesarensis and Mauretania Tingitana, a territory stretching from Cyrenaica in the East to the Atlantic Ocean in the West. Under Diocletian the entire territory was redivided and new provinces were created: the southern part of Proconsular Africa became Byzacena, Tripolitania became an independent province, Numidia was divided into Cirtensis and Militiana, and Mauretania redivided into Sitifensis, Caesariensis and Tingitana.<sup>8</sup> The final division was made by Constantine under whom Libyan Cyrenaica was included with Egypt in the Eastern Prefecture, the Latin African provinces fell into the prefecture of Italy, Illyricum and Africa, while western Mauretania fell under the prefecture of the Gauls. This area as a whole is often referred to generally as 'Roman Africa', but the provinces of course reflect different levels of Romanization, being occupied at different periods.

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<sup>3</sup> The authors of Late Antiquity explained the origin of the name 'Africa' as a derivation of the Greek ἀφρική, 'without cold or shivering'. Herodotus maintains it was named for a woman [4.45].

<sup>4</sup> Herodotus calls the people of Cyrene Libyans, but Polybius gives the name Libya to the area around the city of Carthage. I have followed modern scholars in including all the native African peoples from Egypt up to Carthage under this ethnic group, but for the purposes of this study Cyrenaica will not be dealt with except by way of comparison. This province was historically and culturally closely linked to Greece since the 7<sup>th</sup> century when it was colonized by settlers from Thera, and it remained largely Hellenized, where Africa from Tripolitania westwards was first colonized by the Phoenicians and later became Romanized. Cyrenaica, the area named for the originally Greek colony of Cyrene, became Roman in 74 BC, and Augustus grouped it with Crete as one province.

<sup>5</sup> On this division see also Marcianus Heracleensis 1.4-6 in *Geographi Graeci Minores* 519-20; Martial 6.622; 6.667; Paulus Orosius 1.1 in *Geographi Latini Minores* 56; Pindar P. 9.8; Pliny 2.173; 3.1.3; 28.24; Polybius 3.37; Pomponius Mela 1.8; Sallust, *Bell. Jug.* 17.3; Strabo. 1.4.7-8; Velleius Paterculus 2.40.4.

<sup>6</sup> Although technically only the Roman North African provinces fall under this discussion, some mention will be made of other African cultures in geographical proximity, such as the Aethiopians, the Nubians, the Egyptians and inhabitants of Cyrenaica, where influence or common ground can be detected. Egypt in particular offers a great volume of evidence on women in the Graeco-Roman period: for discussions see MACURDY (1932): *Hellenistic queens. A study of women power in Macedonia, Seleucid Syria and Ptolemaic Egypt*; POMEROY (1981): 'Women in Roman Egypt' and (1984): *Women in Hellenistic Egypt, from Alexander to Cleopatra*; VAN SERTIMA (1984): *Black women in antiquity*, as well as ROWLANDSON (1998): *Women and society in Greek and Roman Egypt: a sourcebook*. For pre-Roman antecedents, CALLENDER (1992): 'Female officials in ancient Egypt and Egyptian historians'.

<sup>7</sup> 'Tripolitania' is the modern name for Romano-Byzantine 'Tripolitana' (Matthews 1957: 17).

<sup>8</sup> Byzacene was originally inhabited by a Libyan people called the Byzantes, and had made up the southern portion of Africa Proconsularis. Provinces were grouped together to form dioceses, each of which fell under the authority of a *vicarius*. Senior military commanders drawn from the equestrian ranks were titled *dux* (duke) or *comes* (count). For administrative purposes Mauretania Tingitana was included in the same diocese as the Spanish provinces (Mahjoubi *et al* 1981: 476).



Of the estimated 500 to 650 cities in the whole of Roman Africa, for example, the greatest concentration (about 200) occurs in Africa Proconsularis, the oldest African province, and most of our evidence stems from these cities.<sup>9</sup> An attempted Moorish uprising in AD 40 led to the Roman annexation of Mauretania, but these two western provinces as organized under Claudius were comparatively thinly settled, and Roman colonists were established in existing Punic or native towns rather than in newly founded Roman ones. Direct Roman control was already withdrawn from the Mauretaniae in AD 280, although some cities such as Volubilis, an indigenous African town, continued to show evidence of a Romanized existence up to the 7<sup>th</sup> century AD (Thouvenot 1941: 43). Roman involvement and influence also decreases towards the South, away from the more Romanized coastal areas (Gascou 1982: 220).

## DEFINING THE ROMAN PERIOD

The entire period of Roman history in Africa will be examined, from the beginning of Roman occupation in 146 BC to the beginning of the Arab conquest of the 7<sup>th</sup> century AD, a natural and logical point of termination even if this involves a rather ambitious chronological scope.<sup>10</sup> For the greater part of this period, however, changes in the development of the position of women are almost indiscernible, as this study will indicate. We see this reflected in for example the work of Veyne, who in his *History of private life* (1987: 12) for example speaks of the views of Augustine and Plautus on contraception in one breath.<sup>11</sup> The distribution of the source material across this time frame is very uneven. The early years of the Roman occupation of Africa yield very little material since the process of Romanization did not accelerate until the principate of Augustus, and for all practical purposes this study commences with the 1<sup>st</sup> century AD. The first two and a half centuries AD furnish a large volume of epigraphical material which begins to dwindle in the 3<sup>rd</sup> century<sup>12</sup> with the political and military crisis which hit Africa following the assassination of Severus Alexander in AD 235. From the end of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century AD Christian literary sources form an increasingly large proportion of the evidence, and from this time to Late Antiquity<sup>13</sup> and beyond, the influence of Christianity on the status of Roman African women must be taken into account.<sup>14</sup> The final two hundred and fifty years of the period will deal firstly with the evidence presented by the Vandal invasion (AD 429-533), which in itself made no profound impact on North

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<sup>9</sup> In the text I have referred to the towns by their Roman name, although the inscriptions are also titled according to the modern town/area in which they were found, with the ancient town in brackets where known or extant. An ancient equivalent is not always possible for the modern place of discovery.

<sup>10</sup> For reference a chronological chart has been included as Appendix B.

<sup>11</sup> On the one hand this indicates that conservative gender roles were in operation, on the other that we are working in an area which does not have enough detailed evidence.

<sup>12</sup> Ascribed by VEYNE (1987): *History of private life*, 171, to the fact that 'Roman epitaphs reflected not some fundamental idea of death but the reign of public rhetoric' which fell into decline during these upheavals.

<sup>13</sup> I have taken the term 'Late Antiquity' in the African context to commence with the redivision of the Empire under Diocletian and Maximian in AD 286 and to end with the Vandal occupation in AD 429. Some scholars refer to the period from the 4<sup>th</sup> century as 'early Byzantine' rather than 'Late Roman', but in this I have followed Anglo-American scholars, who prefer the term 'Late Roman', particularly since this study deals with the western provinces and not the eastern.

<sup>14</sup> The rapidity with which Christianity spread in Roman African society is disputed. By the time Cyprian was bishop of Carthage he could summon 85 bishops from Africa Proconsularis and Numidia to a council (Barton 1972: 58) and Christianity prevailed in urban areas (Christides 2000: 13). Conversely the lack of archaeological evidence (in particular the absence of Christian motifs) leads THÉBERT (1987): 'Private life and domestic architecture in Roman Africa', 397, to believe that Christianity took hold of the African aristocracy quite late (around the 5<sup>th</sup> century AD).



African ethnography except to act as a catalyst for rebellions among the indigenous tribes. Secondly the subsequent Byzantine reoccupation (AD 533- ca.650)<sup>15</sup> of Africa Proconsularis, Byzacene, Tripolitania and Numidia has been examined, since the intervention of Constantinople in Africa was based on the belief that they were the continuation of the Roman Empire.<sup>16</sup> Source material for this period, particularly on women, is very limited, however. Essentially therefore, the period which receives the greatest attention comprises of the 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> centuries AD.<sup>17</sup>

## DEFINING THE PEOPLES OF NORTH AFRICA

Two main cultures existed in North Africa before the Roman occupation: the indigenous tribes and the Phoenician colonizers who had been settled there at least since the 8<sup>th</sup> century BC. The number of tribes North of the Sahara desert appears to have been numerous - Pliny lists as many as 463 [NH 5.1]. Many of these were nomadic and apart from some conflicts with the Roman army had limited contact with Roman civilization and have no bearing on the topic at hand.<sup>18</sup> Other tribes, however, fell into the Roman provinces discussed below and many of them were gradually Romanized and intermarried with the Punic descendants and Roman immigrants (see Romanization below).

'Berbers' and 'Africans' are terms used interchangeably by modern historians for these native tribes of ancient North Africa.<sup>19</sup> By the time the Romans had contact with them they were a fusion of various racial groups. Brett and Fentress (1996: 4) define one stream as Mediterranean, anthropologically closer to the Iberians and Egyptians than to the Arabs and the Aethiopians. In the South they were mixed with the Aethiopians,<sup>20</sup> sometimes exhibiting Negroid hair and facial features, and sometimes dark skins, but not necessarily at the same time (Desanges 1981: 424-428).<sup>21</sup>

The eastern tribes from Cyrenaica to Carthage were termed 'Libyans' until the Byzantine period. The central northern African tribes were grouped together under the name 'Numidians'.<sup>22</sup> At one time they fell within the

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<sup>15</sup> Whether at this point we can still talk of purely Roman history is of course debatable. For example Justinian's general Belisarius has to remind his soldiers that they were not to harm the Africans, who were after all, Romans like themselves [Procop., *De Bell. Vand.* 3.20.18-19].

<sup>16</sup> The references to the 'Byzantine period' are modern constructs, therefore. In European history no break was seen from 'Roman Empire' until the 14<sup>th</sup> century, and Frederik Barbarossa was as much the emperor of Rome as Augustus had been.

<sup>17</sup> These historical demarcations are merely a practical convention here and are not intended to imply that these dates somehow indicate watershed dates for the development of the role and status of women in Roman Africa. For discussion as to whether conventional periodization applies to the female context, see CULHAM (1997): 'Did Roman women have an empire?'.

<sup>18</sup> Note for example Sallust's comment: ... *Gaetulos, genus hominum ferum incultumque et eo tempore ignarum nominis Romani* ('the Gaetulians, a wild and uncivilized race of men, who at that time had never heard the name of Rome') [*Bell. Jug.* 80.1].

<sup>19</sup> The name 'Berber' is derived from the Latin *barbarus* (Norris 1982: 1). These tribes often had different customs, even though broadly they shared the same culture, for example the fact that they were organized in agnatic kinship groups and village clans, for which reason they are described in general terms as 'native Africans' or 'indigenous tribes'. On the use of 'Libyans' for non-Negro African peoples, see Herodotus [2.32, 4.37], Diodorus Siculus [20.55] and Polybius [3.33].

<sup>20</sup> The name Aethiopians meaning burned by the sun was a reference to the colour of their skin [Hdt. 2.22; Manil., *Astron.* 4.758-9; Strabo 15.1.24]. Manilius further distinguishes between Aethiopians as the 'blackest', more so than the Indians or the Egyptians [4.722-730].

<sup>21</sup> A brief description of the racial and cultural impact on the Berbers is given by DESANGES (1981): 'The proto-Berbers', but the subject would appear controversial even in the ancient sources (see Desanges 1981: 428).

<sup>22</sup> The Greek νομάδες and Numidae are identical, the Romans deriving it from the Greek word meaning to graze, which they took to



borders of the kingdom of Numidia, and under the reign of Masinissa the tribes were to some extent united and a Numidian-Carthaginian culture became dominant even in the hinterland of North Africa. The Numidae were the largest tribe, but Numidia included some of the Gaetulians and also the Massyli in the South. Brett and Fentress (1996: 33) maintain that the Numidian kingdom formed only a superficial structure, and that in fact the tribal social structures probably remained strong.<sup>23</sup> The larger part of the Gaetolian tribal group occupied the long strip along the pre-desert. Some of them were settled by Roman times<sup>24</sup> and some were nomadic pastoralists.<sup>25</sup> Herodotus [4.186] makes a general distinction between the African tribes in that those of the West were settled while the eastern tribes remained nomadic, although this cannot be used as an absolute definition. The other tribe which features prominently in the Roman sources [for example, Strabo 2.2 *passim*; Pliny, *NH* 5.5; Ptolemy 1.8.4; Cor., *Ioh.* 5.198; Sid. Apol., *Carm.* 5.337] were the Garamantes who were to be found to the South-East of Africa Proconsularis, the area known as the Fezzān.<sup>26</sup> Under the general name of Mauri or Moors were grouped the most westward tribes, which were first mentioned by Polybius (Μαυρούσιοι),<sup>27</sup> and Mauri was the term henceforth used by the Romans for the inhabitants of the area stretching from the Ampsaga river to the ocean, and for whom the Mauretanian provinces were named. The Romans also later came to use this as a generic name for all non-Romanized inhabitants of North Africa, the equivalent of *barbaros* (Christides 2000: 6), tribes or groups of tribes like the Mazices, mentioned by Ammianus Marcellinus [27.9.1] and Corippus [*Ioh.* 1.549f], who roamed the interior during the 4<sup>th</sup> to 6<sup>th</sup> centuries.<sup>28</sup> The word 'Bedouin' is also sometimes used by modern sources for the North African tribesmen, but for the Roman period this term (a Franco-Arabic word literally meaning 'tent-dweller') is anachronistic since the Arab invasion and subsequent influence brought the Roman period to an end. To the East semi-nomadic tribes such as the Nasamones and the Marmaridae populated the area up to the borders of Egypt.<sup>29</sup> To the South-East lay the kingdoms of Yemenite Saba/Sheba, Cush, Nubia and Axum, generally referred to as Aethiopia. The term 'Aethiopians' was used by ancient Greek and Roman writers to refer to the inland black tribes generally to distinguish them from the lighter-skinned Libyans in the North (Hendrickx 1984: 23). Tribal distinctions have not been dealt with in detail in this study since it is essentially Romanized Africans that will come under discussion. A simple distinction has therefore been made between the term 'native' or 'indigenous' African, including the Libyans, Numidians and Mauri, and 'Roman African' including all Romanized people living in Africa regardless of origin.

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be a description of their pastoral way of life (Warmington 1981: 442).

<sup>23</sup> This is generally supported by modern scholars such as ABUN-NASR (1971): *A history of the Maghrib*, 8, who maintains that the Berber's first allegiance was always to his tribe, and that a national consciousness never existed, even today.

<sup>24</sup> Strabo [17.3.9 and 25.2] refers to scattered villages in this territory and also *oppida Gaetulorum*; Vergil also mentions *Gaetulae urbes* [*Aen.* 4.42].

<sup>25</sup> Sallust [*Bell. Jug.* 19.5] states that some of Gaetulians lived in huts, while others led a nomadic life. BATES (1970): *The Eastern Libyans*, 91-92, believes that the Libyans spent the winter months in sedentary fashion, and in the summer months took up the nomadic lifestyle.

<sup>26</sup> The Garamantes were black or at least very dark skinned: Ptolemy [1.8.5; 1.9.7] Frontinus, *Strat.* 1.2.18 (during the Sicilian expedition of 480); Diodorus [20.57.5].

<sup>27</sup> According to Isidorus the word Mauri is derived from μαῦρος, 'dark' [*Orig.* 14.5.10]. Also Manilius: *Mauretania nomen oris habet titulumque suo fert ipsa colore* ('The Moors derive their name from the colour of their faces and their identity is proclaimed by the colour of their skins') [*Astron.* 4.729-730].

<sup>28</sup> See also the thorough discussion by SIGMAN (1977): 'The Romans and the indigenous tribes of Mauretania Tingitana'.

<sup>29</sup> *The Eastern Libyans* by BATES (1970) gives a detailed discussion of these tribes.



The Phoenicians or Punic people who settled at Carthage initially entered into a treaty with the local peoples which limited their expansion more or less to Carthage and the land immediately surrounding it [Livy 34.62.12].<sup>30</sup> They first expanded their hegemony over the other western Phoenician colonies in the 6<sup>th</sup> century BC, and in the following century the Carthaginians imposed their rule on some of the settled tribes in Africa [Diod. Sic. 20.55, Polyb. 3.33]. By the 3<sup>rd</sup> century BC they seemed to control much of northern Tunisia and Algeria [Diod. Sic. 20.8.4; Justin, *Hist. Phil.* 21.4.6]. Seizing control was made easier by the fact that the local inhabitants were in a lower state of civilization (the Stone Age) than the Phoenician settlers (Warmington 1969:25-26). The Carthaginians (who according to modern estimates (Law 1978: 126) numbered about 400 000) formed a ruling caste over the local settled population, who were seen as serfs by their Punic conquerors and used as mercenaries in their army. Integration was an inevitable result of the territorial expansion in Africa. Polybius [3.33.15], followed by Pliny [*NH* 5.3.24], refers to the Libyans of Africa Proconsularis as Λιβυφοίνικες or *Libyphoenices*, further defined by Livy as *Libyphoenices mixtum punicum afris genus* [21.22.3].<sup>31</sup> According to the observation of Sallust:

*Eius civitatis [Lepcis Magna] lingua modo convorsa conubio Numidarum; legum cultusque pleraque Sidonica, quae eo facilius retinebant, quod procul ab imperio regis aetatem agebant. Inter illos et frequentem Numidiam multi vastique loci erant.*

Only the speech of this city [Lepcis Magna] has been affected by intermarriage with the Numidians; its laws and customs are for the most part Sidonian, and these the inhabitants retained more easily because they passed their life at a distance from the Numidian capital. For between them and the thickly settled part of Numidia lay an extensive desert.

[*Bell. Jug.* 78.4]

Law (1978: 184) points to the effects of Punic culture on neighbouring Numidia (which was not subject to Carthage) through trade, service in the Carthaginian army and through intermarriage between Punic and Numidian ruling dynasties.<sup>32</sup>

### ROMANIZATION AND STATUS<sup>33</sup> - URBAN ÉLITE, SOLDIERS, PEASANTS AND RURAL TRIBES

Romanization and its connection to status and social mobility for women needs firstly to be discussed in the context of what these meant in the public male-dominated world, since a woman's status was linked to that of her father and later her husband - she had no social level independent of them. In Chapters 12 and 13 it will be demonstrated to what extent a woman could actively influence her husband's status and social mobility, which was her only means of advancing her own. The following overview will serve as a basis for the more detailed discussion later.

Romanization is a far more complicated phenomenon than can be treated with justice here, but in essence it was

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<sup>30</sup> Livy mentions this in the context of a land dispute with the Numidians.

<sup>31</sup> For the modern use of this word to designate the Phoenician cities of Africa, see LASSÈRE (1977): *Ubique Populus*, 39 n.33.

<sup>32</sup> Also discussed in greater detail in the article by CAMPS (1979): 'Les Numides et la civilisation punique'. See also p. 53 of this text.

<sup>33</sup> The word 'status' is used in this study in its most flexible sense, including a variety of prestige-determining aspects such as birth, wealth, career, marriage and so on, where the terms 'rank', or 'class' are more narrowly defined by wealth and order. The following paragraphs are only a brief summary of Romanization and definitions of status within the Roman African context. The subject of Romanization is thoroughly covered in BÉNABOU (1976a): *Le résistance africaine à la romanisation* and (1976b): 'Résistance et romanisation en Afrique du Nord sous le Haut-Empire'; BLAGG AND MILLETT (1990): *The early Roman empire in the West*, and this aspect also forms part of the discussion of class and status in the Roman Empire in GARNSEY AND SALLER (1987): *The Roman Empire: economy, society and culture*, 107-125.



a process in which the attributes, institutions and other externals of Roman civilization were adopted by non-Roman groups.<sup>34</sup> Although Tacitus speaks rather cynically of the Latin language, the wearing of the toga and the indulgence in the luxury of the baths and banquets as the instruments of servitude [*Agric.* 21], it was an unenforced and voluntary process set in motion mainly by the inducement of certain advantages attached to Roman-given status.<sup>35</sup> The Romans allowed local religious, social and even some political institutions<sup>36</sup> to remain in place, although reforms were introduced where Roman *mores* or political interests were diametrically opposed by local practices, such as the rite of human sacrifice in Roman Africa. The evidence of Carthaginian tombs indicates that at least in the material sense Punic culture was lacking compared to that of Greece or Rome.<sup>37</sup> Punic culture had proved to be very receptive to Hellenistic influence during the 4<sup>th</sup>/3<sup>rd</sup> century BC, which paved the way for later Romanization. Romanization had its most visible effect in the urbanized environment - elsewhere, especially further South towards the desert its impact was sporadic and even negligible, although Tertullian at the beginning of the 3<sup>rd</sup> century AD was able to write the following enthusiastic description:

*omnia iam pervia, omnia negotiosa, solitudines famosas retro fundi amoenissimi oblitteraverunt, silvas arva domuerunt feras pecora fugaverunt, harenae seruntur, saxa panduntur, paludes eliquantur, tantae urbes, quantae non casae quondam.... ubique domus, ubique populus, ubique respublica, ubique vita.*

Famous marshes have been blotted out by fair estates, forests have been conquered by ploughed fields, wild beasts have been put to flight by flocks of sheep, the sands are sown, the rocks planted, the marshes drained, there are more towns than there used to be huts... everywhere there are houses, people, organised government, life.

[Tert., *De Anima* 30.3]

All societies form social divisions of relatively permanent groups distinguishable by their unequal access to resources, power and privilege, and 'status' is a relative concept based on the prestige associated with these various groups. In the case of the North African territory three social tiers were created in the first decades of Roman occupation: the Romans in their settlements and small trading groups, initially quite predictably in the manner of colonists keeping to themselves and replicating the Roman lifestyle;<sup>38</sup> the Punic group dominant in their own towns, and the indigenous Africans, who formed the bulk of the population of which a large proportion was settled in the rural areas. During the 1<sup>st</sup> century AD the Roman colonists became more open to local influences, and by the 2<sup>nd</sup> century it had even become fashionable to claim some African roots (even if the family came of purely Roman stock) (Rives 1995: 162). At the same time some of the Punic aristocracy had benefited from collaboration with the Romans and remained a part of the urban élite. With the inevitable cultural assimilation and integration, by the end of the 1<sup>st</sup> century AD 'Roman Africans' had come to mean those

<sup>34</sup> BÉNABOU (1976a): *Le résistance africaine à la romanisation*, 18 *passim*, describes this as an irregular phenomenon where the fusion of native and Roman elements produced a varied end product according to the proportion of the mixture. VANDOMMELEN (1998): 'Punic persistence: colonialism and cultural identities' also argues for a more subtle or less polarized (Roman: native, or resistance: acceptance) approach to the acculturation process.

<sup>35</sup> For example legal privileges, access to the hierarchy of Roman political life (culminating in the example of the first African emperor, Septimius Severus) and even advantageous for business and trade. There are of course other expedient motives for natives adopting Roman customs, such as Jugurtha's adoption of Roman military skills which he combined with the use of Numidian cavalry [Sall., *Bell. Jug.* 20.7; 23.1]. In the 1<sup>st</sup> century AD the Numidian Tacfarinas used a similar combination of tactics [Tac., *Ann.* 2.52; 3.20 *passim*; 3.32; 3.73 *passim*; 4.13, 23-26].

<sup>36</sup> In one instance, for example, the emperor Hadrian even recommended to the people of Utica that they keep their traditional laws rather than exchanging them for those of a Roman colony.

<sup>37</sup> Every valuable object found within them was imported (Charles-Picard 1964: 50).

<sup>38</sup> DESANGES (1981): 'The proto-Berbers', 423, following ROMANELLI (1959): *Storia delle province romane dell'Africa*, 207, estimates about 20 000 Italian colonists for the Augustan period, when colonization was at its peak.



born in these provinces and Romanized, and those who settled there but were of Roman origin, or even other ethnic origin, but Romanized.<sup>39</sup> Under the latter two we may include for example those who were appointed to particular offices in these provinces, including the *III Augusta*, the legion stationed in Africa (from the 2<sup>nd</sup> century AD soldiers were also recruited locally). Culturally, or at least as far as one is able to tell from inscriptions and archaeology, the Roman of Libyan or Punic descent was indistinguishable from any other citizen, and although names can sometimes be an indication of Punic, Libyan or immigrant Roman origins, in most cases there is no certainty. The *Constitutio Antoniniana* in 212 granted Roman citizenship to all freeborn men throughout the Empire<sup>40</sup> and heralded (or was perhaps a part of) an era in which Romanization itself underwent changes as it transformed itself from its Italian focus to absorb the myriad of cultural influences of the Roman world. Because of these changes new status groups were formed in which wealth became the overriding factor in separating the general populace or *humiliores* from the élite minority, the *honestiores*.

The Vandals who established themselves at the top of the local hierarchy in the 5<sup>th</sup> century set up an uneasy alliance with the local Roman élite during their century of occupation. Clover (1982a: 3) distinguishes three branches of the new dominant status group: the *optimates* ('nobles'); the Arian ecclesiastical hierarchy;<sup>41</sup> and the warriors. The Byzantines in their turn brought a Greek bureaucracy, although little is known about their interaction with the local élite, possibly because there was less friction between them - they did not come as an occupying force taking land from the local inhabitants.

### Initial contacts with Roman authorities and material advantage

Many local non-Roman aristocrats like Lucius Memmius Pacatus [*CIL* 22729 = *ILS* 9394] who 'stood out among his people' (according to the Cinithian tribe who erected this commemoration to one of their own) were quick to take advantage of the benefits of Romanization, as his *tria nomina* indicate. Likewise T(itus) Flavius Septimianu(s) Pescianus Mus(onius) [*AE* 1979, 679], a *prin[ceps] gentis*, whose lengthy name indicates that he was of the Musonian tribe and that he received citizenship under one of the Flavian emperors, before the foundation of the colony - as *princeps gentis* he probably played an intermediary role in the Romanization of his tribe. Romanization was however not a process which necessarily led to complete assimilation in Roman culture. In his description of the revolt of Firmus in the 4<sup>th</sup> century, Ammianus describes a certain Fericius as *praefectum gentis* or 'prefect of the tribe' [29.5.21]. This Roman title seems to have been adopted by the Mazices without further Romanization taking place. Many such tribal chieftains supplied manpower to guard the frontier in return for subsidies and the granting of imperial investiture recognizing their local authority (Mahjoubi *et al* 1981: 474)

The privatization of tribal lands initiated by the Romans was one of the areas in which advantage was to be had in Roman citizenship. A tribal chief could acquire control of large tracts of land if he were on friendly terms

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<sup>39</sup> In many cases it is difficult to determine whether an individual was native, Roman or Romanized. BIRLEY (1988b): 'Names at Lepcis Magna', distinguishes three clear types in which Roman names were either (a) adopted from an emperor, senatorial or other patron on acquisition of Roman citizenship (b) Punic/Libyan names replaced by similar sounding Roman ones (c) Latin name is a literal translation of the Punic or Libyan. Misspelling of Roman names is also a clear indication in the attempt at what BRADLEY (1997): 'Law, magic and culture', 215), calls '[people] of native origin striving to renegotiate their cultural identity'.

<sup>40</sup> This excluded the members of African tribes who had remained unrecognized by the Roman authorities, who were classified among the *dediticii*.

<sup>41</sup> On the conversion of the Vandals to Arianism, see p. 41 n. 77 below.



with the Romans.<sup>42</sup> For the peasant the origin of the landlord's authority probably did not make much difference, he simply paid rent where formerly he had paid tribute. But for the landlord there was increased power and with his wealth he could participate in the urban economy. Clearly those who sought the status benefits of Romanization were initially those who in their own cultures already had the weapons of status and wealth to do so. According to the interpretation of Bénabou (1976a: 390 and 1976b: 369ff) it was part of a Roman strategy to confer Roman citizenship on these local pre-Roman élites. It was in this way that Julianus, the chief of the Zegrenses, a Mauri tribe, who requested citizenship for himself, his wife and their four children, was granted his behest on 6 July 177.

Despite the emphasis given to Romanization below, it is important to remain aware that Romanization was not the only way to rise to prominence, as the above information indicates, and it was not a prerequisite for the promotion of individuals (Garnsey 1978: 248). In his book *Fronto and Antonine Rome*, Champlin (1980: 17-19) argues that African Romans strove to emulate Rome in every possible way, but he is clearly speaking of the élite from which Fronto stemmed. Elsewhere, especially among the rural population, evidence for such enthusiastic Romanization is lacking (Bénabou 1982: 16-21). Because our evidence of literature, epigraphy and iconography is however, largely Romanized it is precisely this urban élite group which is the focus of this study.

### Roman citizenship

From the attempted settlement of Roman colonists by Gracchus (122 BC) and Caesar's foundation of Roman Carthage, large numbers of Romans made their home in the African provinces, a far greater number than in neighbouring Cyrenaica and Egypt.<sup>43</sup> The end of civil war in 31 BC saw Augustus settling perhaps as many as 300 000 men in their home towns throughout the empire or in colonies like the ones established in Africa, for example Sicca Veneria, Thuburbo Minus and Uthina. Besides the more usual ways to Roman citizenship, by birth, adoption or manumission by a Roman citizen, more and more native African or Punic settlements came to receive communal grants of full citizenship or the Latin status (which conferred citizenship on the senior magistrates of the towns),<sup>44</sup> and grants of Roman citizenship were also made to individuals by emperors and proconsuls. Roman soldiers upon retirement received special privileges or *beneficia* from the Roman emperor, including the grants of citizenship to themselves, their wives and their children. Veterans of auxiliary units also automatically received citizenship and sometimes land grants on retirement.<sup>45</sup>

A shift away from the special status of citizenship occurred in the middle of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century: 'The citizen/non-citizen distinction lost much of its significance in the course of the Principate. .... the legal divisions within the population tended to be overshadowed by the social divisions based on the elite system of values. The result was the emergence by the reign of Hadrian of the formal distinction between the elite and the humble masses

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<sup>42</sup> A study by FERCHIOU (1987): 'Le paysage funéraire pré-romain dans deux régions céréalières de Tunisie antique' suggests that the tombs found in the Medjerda Valley were built by the Libyan landlords on what had been tribal land.

<sup>43</sup> Marius and Pompey for example settled their veterans in Africa. The land offered good economic prospects and the province was in proximity to Sicily.

<sup>44</sup> More often than not these towns already included a substantial proportion of Roman citizens (Law 1978: 202).

<sup>45</sup> BRETT AND FENTRESS (1996): *The Berbers*, 54, compare the identification of the local military ethos with the function of the Roman army: 'A similar grafting of an indigenous military culture on to an imperial army was found in this century in India, when the Gurkha regiments were recruited from independent states outside the frontier, and formed a source of income and prestige for their recruits - and, indirectly, for the independent states themselves'.



(*honestiores* and *humiliores*)' (Garnsey and Saller 1987: 115-116). This process reached its culmination in 212, a clear illustration of a society in which the greatest virtue was wealth.<sup>46</sup>

### Romanization and status in the African towns

The *civitas* was the centre of local government for a whole area, including both the city itself (the basic unit for economic, political and social life until Late Antiquity) and the surrounding rural landscape.<sup>47</sup> The social structure, however, showed a sharp division between town and country dweller, the former encompassing roughly between a third and a quarter of the population of Africa Proconsularis and a diminishing percentage in the western African provinces. Town dwellers, in particular the urban élite, were highly Romanized, where the rural population remained largely unaffected by this process. The status of the Romanized urban aristocracy was determined by three factors: respectable birth, wealth and perceived moral worth or social standing. Thus Apuleius is able to say in the *Florida* [8] that while only a few men could be senators, even fewer were noble, fewer still consulars, fewer virtuous and fewer *eruditi* or learned (a rather subjective statement in which he qualifies himself among the few at the top by virtue and education rather than birth and wealth). But at least we may conclude that there was some value in appearing, at least, to be virtuous. At the summit of provincial African status stood those with inherited wealth or who had increased their fortune in trade and land deals, a small élite group who lived in large *villae urbanae* or on *latifundia*. Some of these were of senatorial rank, either by birth or having gained the senate as a provincial, who spent only a part of their time, if at all, on their African estates. Most of these were of Italian stock - few native African or Punic names are represented (Deman 1975: 72; Petit 1976: 164). Members of the equestrian order were next in status, sometimes important officials but also Roman(ized) businessmen, who had amassed considerable wealth to the sum of 400 000 sesterces or more. This group was followed by the municipal élite, at the top of which stood the *ordo decurionum*, usually about 100 citizens over the age of 25 who served as decurions in their respective towns and retained their seat for life. Respectable birth was less stringently applied to this group - sons of freedmen and veterans who met the property requirements (100 000 sesterces) were also eligible for the council, and served to replenish this pool of municipal officials. A fee upon entering office was required, and the municipal élite enhanced their status by occasional largesse towards their towns, for example financing public buildings or giving public banquets. A freedman was not eligible for office, but could be honoured by an appointment as *flamen Augustalis*, which in practice conferred some of the benefits and some of the obligations of municipal office: the *flamines* had special seats in theatres, paid a fee to gain office and were obliged to make public benefactions. During the Late Empire the status of the municipal élites waned as the rich withdrew from the towns and established themselves on their estates, and decurions such as Patricius, the father of Augustine, were overshadowed by the power of these wealthy landlords.

The lower middle status group consisted of farmers and small-scale merchants whose involvement with the political life of the cities was less prominent. Their status varied according to occupation and resources. These

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<sup>46</sup> The *Constitutio Antoniniana* is thought by some scholars to have been motivated by empty state coffers and the prospect of a greater number of taxable citizens (Hassall 1990: 698 *passim*) rather than by a wish to recognise the extent of Romanization in the provinces (Sherwin-White 1973: 281).

<sup>47</sup> An indication that many African cities functioned as centres to those that lived outside it is the high number of public buildings in proportion to what is usually a smaller number of private dwellings (Charles-Picard 1975: 110 *passim*).



and the privileged groups discussed above made up approximately one-sixth of the population of North Africa, where the other five-sixths lived anonymously at subsistence level.<sup>48</sup>

### **Social mobility<sup>49</sup>**

Prestige takes into account past achievements and future prospects as well as present context, and in Roman societies during the Empire there were possibilities for the upward or downward social mobility of the individual, however limited.<sup>50</sup> An individual's access to a higher status was determined by his claim to the various qualities which this prestige level represented. Patronage often played an important role here - wealthy and well-connected individuals were elected by local senates to favour and often finance the advancement of ambitious individuals. Generally movement from one stratum to another became less and less fluid in Late Antiquity, when the social divide between the aristocracy and the peasantry widened (Charanis 1973a: 39).

### **Status-conferring elements of the Romanized élite**

Some of the elements which conferred status - language and outward appearance - are identified in Tacitus' comment referred to above,<sup>51</sup> but everything Roman from a villa to knowledge of Latin literature was part of the sought after status for that section of the population which had the wealth and the ambition to attain it. The fact that a high degree of public building is attested in particularly Asia and Africa during the Roman period supports the view that to be Romanized was highly sought after in these provinces. Most probably those who cultivated these elements did not think of themselves as anything but Romans. Some of the most important Romanizing elements are briefly discussed below.

#### **(i) Education**

To participate fully in the Roman world, one had to be free and 'civilized', in other words, educated in the Roman manner. For Roman men education was an essential component of high rank. It set them apart from the rest of society, distinguished their status and enabled them to compete with one another in those qualities which the Romans held in esteem - displaying the attributes of well read 'gentlemen' of the era. Roman literary education was not of an immediate practical nature in the sense that it trained efficient governors or capable administrators. It consisted largely of reading works from the Classical canon like Homer and Vergil, and moving on to a study of rhetoric. Indeed, 'the standard of their linguistic perfection was measured against books written centuries earlier rather than the language of the streets', observe Potter and Mattingly (1999: 5), 'You could tell an aristocrat as soon as he opened his mouth even if he were swimming naked next to you in a bath.' It is this knowledge of literature and philosophy which Apuleius uses in his court defence to forge a link

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<sup>48</sup> Outside the urban élite the evidence becomes more problematical, not least because problems exist in defining those who fall below the urban élite into 'classes'.

<sup>49</sup> On aspects which qualified social mobility, see GARNSEY AND SALLER (1987): *The Roman Empire: economy, society and culture*, 123-124.

<sup>50</sup> The best known examples of upward mobility for men are the first African consul, Aurelius Pactumeius (Cirta) and the rise of the Septimii Severii of Lepcis Magna who had such a successful family *cursus*, fully discussed in Birley's work on the African emperor (1988<sup>2</sup>). For a listing of senators and equestrians from the provinces, see DEMAN (1975): 'Materiaux et réflexions pour servir à une étude du développement et du sous-développement dans les provinces de l'empire romain', 67 *passim*. Examples from the Late Roman Empire are collected by HOPKINS (1961): 'Social mobility in the later Roman Empire: the evidence of Ausonius'.

<sup>51</sup> See above p. 29.

between himself and the proconsul Claudius Maximus, his judge.<sup>52</sup> But such an education was the passport to political success which could grant access even to Rome. The African Aurelius Victor ascribed his success and upward mobility to his education:

*Quo bonis omnibus ac mihi fidendum magis, qui rure ortus tenui atque indocto patre, in haec tempora vitam praestiti studiis tantis honestiorem*

I grew up in the countryside, the son of a poor and uneducated father. In my time I have come, through my pursuit of literature, to live the life of an aristocrat. [De Caes. 20.5.5]

In the 4<sup>th</sup> century Augustine pitied his cousins who had no access to education and perforce had to remain within the narrow confines of their own world [De B. Vita 1.6]. In the case of Augustine's own father, providing his son with an education was clearly a financial strain, and the availability of education was not to be taken for granted. Brown (1967: 24) is probably correct in saying that, although the Romanized Africans 'worshipped education', its local quality was not generally of the highest order, even though it provided status for municipal élites.

## (ii) Latin language

The language of Carthage had been the official form of communication throughout North Africa [Pliny, NH 18.22] (although little is known about what percentage of the local population spoke it), but by the end of the 1<sup>st</sup> century AD it is likely that most Africans of standing spoke Latin.<sup>53</sup> The originally Punic city of Lepcis Magna, for example, was thoroughly Romanized by the end of the 1<sup>st</sup> century AD, and while Punic was still spoken, it was rarely used in documentation. The last Punic name among the municipal élite in this city can be dated to AD 72 - after this all the magistrates are Roman citizens, which is approximately representative for all cities of Punic origin. The Romans looked down on those who spoke only Punic, let alone one of the indigenous languages. The emperor Septimius Severus was reportedly embarrassed that his sister spoke bad Latin when she came to Rome.<sup>54</sup> He himself spoke with a heavy Punic accent and the Romans sneered at his African belief in dreams [SHA: Sept. Sev. 19.10; Geta 2.6].<sup>55</sup> Augustine would also feel himself remarked on in Milan for his African accent [De Ord. 2.17.45]. The desirability of being more Roman than the Romans can be inferred from the words of Statius, addressing Septimius Severus, grandfather of the emperor (PIR S 345: 4):

*non sermo Poenus, non habitus tibi non externa mens: Italus Italus.*

*sunt Urbe Romanisque turmis qui Libyam deceant alumni*

Your speech is not Punic, nor your bearing; your outlook is not foreign. Italian are you, Italian.

In the city and among the Roman knights there are foster sons who do Libya credit.

[Silvae 4.5.45-48]

And this was not only the case in Rome. Likewise Pudens in Apuleius' *Apologia* is ridiculed because of his bad Latin [98.8], although we may speculate on whether Pudens himself felt any desire to further his knowledge of the language, if indeed it was as bad as Apuleius wishes to imply.<sup>56</sup> Knowledge of Latin and even of Greek may

<sup>52</sup> This point is greatly expanded upon by BRADLEY in his article 'Law, magic and culture in the *Apologia* of Apuleius' (1997). On the historical Claudius Maximus, see HUNINK (1997): *Apuleius of Madauros: Pro se de magia*, 12 and references.

<sup>53</sup> See below p. 38.

<sup>54</sup> This is discussed more fully on p. 75-76.

<sup>55</sup> RUGGINI (1987): 'Intolerance: equal and less equal in the Roman world', 190-204 provides a brief overview of anti-barbarian bias in the ancient world, although there was no racism in the sense of a belief in biological inferiority, as in later history. DUBUISSON (2001): 'Barbares et barbarie dans le monde gréco-romaine: du concept au slogan' gives a history of the politics of difference from the Greek view to the more nuanced Roman view and Christian development, with an extensive bibliography.

<sup>56</sup> For the overestimation of this remark as evidence for the non-use of Latin in North Africa, see HARRISON (2000): *Apuleius. A Latin*



have been necessary for the involvement in and administration of a city, but this comprised only a small percentage of the population. Approximately two and a half centuries later, Augustine's ignorance of 'Punic' is but one example of the complete transition of the educated status groups to Latin.<sup>57</sup> During the same period the Donatist bishop Macrobius, arriving in Hippo in 409 at the head of a mob of hillside countrymen, was unable to speak their language either, even though he had spent four years in exile in these primitive villages because of the latest imperial law against Donatism [Aug., *Ep.* 108.5.14].<sup>58</sup> Nevertheless in speaking of Romanized Africans we are looking at a very small percentage of the total population in the African provinces.<sup>59</sup>

### (iii) Ancestry and ethnicity

There was however no shame in being of mixed blood or wholly of local origin - thus Fronto in a letter to Marcus Aurelius calls himself a 'barbarian, .. a Libyan of the Libyan nomads' (βάρβαρος ... ἐγὼ δὲ Λίβυς τῶν Λιβύων τῶν νομάδων) [*Ep. Graecae* 1.5 and similarly in 8.1], although no doubt he felt confident that the emperor would contradict him. Apuleius proclaims his Numidian-Gaetulan ancestry [*Apol.* 24.1], and Optatus of Milevis states himself to be *de sanguine Mauro* [26.185]. Both Thompson (1969: 145) and Rives (1995: 162) note that aristocrats often proclaimed native origins when they were clearly of Roman descent, at least in part, and regularly gave their own children Punicized *cognomina*. It is likely that this is a reflection of a kind of provincialism, taking pride in the distinction of one's place of birth as being different from that of another. The focus of such snobbery, however, remained the fact that it was only proclaimed by those who were indubitably Roman citizens. Roman identity was firstly a matter of citizenship rather than of race or ethnic group. A further point of comparative interest is made in two articles (Van Dommelen 1998 and Marshall 1998) about cultural identity in the Roman empire, that provincial cities, for example in Sardinia or Cyrenaica, forged a new identity based partly on the colonizing powers and partly on their own native population. Of course not everyone took pride in native or pre-Roman roots. In 390 Augustine writing to Maximus the Grammarian castigates him '... yet you scorn and despise Punic names like one excessively devoted to the altars of Rome' (*et tamen Punica nomina tamquam nimium Romanorum altaribus deditus cotemnis ac despicias*) [*Ep.* 16.2], even though one could assume that by this time wealth had replaced birth and ethnic origin as the basis of social distinction for municipal élites. Clearly one has to allow for a large margin of individuality in the adoption of the Roman identity.

### (iv) Displays of rank and wealth

The Roman *toga* was a visible sign of the distinction of being a Roman citizen, also in the provinces. The

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*Sophist*, 84 n.114. Even if this is an exaggeration of the truth, however, it must reflect that such circumstances were believable, even in a family of some wealth and equestrian status.

<sup>57</sup> COURTOIS (1950): 'S. Augustine et la survivance de la punique' discusses the nature of Punic in the time of Augustine, which must have contained at least vestiges of Phoenician since Augustine compares some of its vocabulary with Hebrew [*Enarr. in Ps.* 136.18]. True Berber today is considered to be a Hamito-Semitic language (Norris 1982: 1). See also BASSET (1921): 'Les influences puniques chez les Berbères' for some comments of the Punic influences on modern Berber, *contra* MILLAR (1968): 'Local cultures in the Roman Empire: Libyan, Punic and Latin in Roman Africa', 128, who finds no 'coherent social and linguistic continuum' from ancient Punic or Libyan to modern Berber.

<sup>58</sup> On Donatism, its origins and general nature, see below p. 40.

<sup>59</sup> Language in the Roman African context is discussed by HARRIS (1989): *Ancient literacy*, 175-180; MATTINGLY (1994): *Tripolitania*, 162-167 and MILLAR (1968): 'Local cultures in the Roman Empire: Libyan, Punic and Latin in Roman Africa'.



municipal magistrates wore the *toga praetexta*, and statues and portraits of Romanized women show them wearing the traditional Roman *stola*. In the 4<sup>th</sup> century a comment by Augustine reveals that dress, which had become very ostentatious by this time, was still that 'by which the ranks of men are distinguished' [*De Doctr. Chr.* 2.25.39]. 'Conspicuous consumption' (Garnsey and Saller 1987: 121) could be displayed in other ways, such as a large house with innumerable slaves for every possible task. Women could also play a role in this form of exhibitionism: '... wealthy husbands used their older wives as indexes of their affluence - a form of conspicuous consumption' (Fantham *et al* 1994: 262). Elaborate forms of dress clearly distinguished the man or woman of status from the lower orders of society and certainly from the 'barbarian tribes', so that in the African context Procopius can make a scathing comment on the γυμνοὺς Μαυρουσίους ('naked Moors') [*De Bell. Vand.* 3.19.7]. In theatres and amphitheatres seating was especially arranged to distinguish those of the curial order from the common mass.<sup>60</sup> Decurions along with any other Roman magistrates or senators occupied the most conspicuous seats, in the orchestra. At public banquets and distributions, rank was the measure by which food or money was handed out (Duncan-Jones 1974: 138-143). The number of clients and dependents also signified the power and status of the individual.

#### (v) Intermarriage

In the process of upward mobility and Romanization intermarriage between Roman and non-Roman groups undoubtedly played a role, although not always one which furthered the Romanization process. This is essentially something which is difficult to document. In neighbouring Cyrenaica it appears to have occurred between Greek colonists and Libyan women - Law (1978: 115) speculates in their case that the Greek colonists may have brought few women of their own, something which immediately brings to mind the Roman veterans who were left in Africa. Less likely are unions between native Africans and freeborn Roman women, but although ideally it was not seemly for a man to marry a woman above his station (for example a freedman and a freeborn woman) this seems to have occurred throughout the Roman world, and it would certainly have been possible for Roman women to marry into wealthy Punic families.<sup>61</sup> By the time of the Arab conquest in the seventh century, Christides can confidently assert that 'the majority of citizens of all these cities was of African stock' (2000: 7).

#### (vi) Roman religions and priesthoods

In official or public cults the first Roman magistrates and priests were appointed by the colonial charters for each settlement, and further organization of particular cults was left to the *ordo decurionum* (Rives 1995: 28-29). The duties of priests were manifold, for example leading the sacrificial animal to the altar or sacrificing it, letting contracts for the supplying of the animals, giving the responsibility of maintaining the temples to

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<sup>60</sup> Privileged seating was regulated by law since its introduction by the tribune Lucius Roscius Otho in Rome. It is debatable how many seats were left for the common lower class citizens in such theatres: 'It is in such theatres that the municipal authorities expressed their power by securing performances' (Christides 2000: 8).

<sup>61</sup> The *lex Iulia de maritandis ordinibus* specifically forbade men of status to marry beneath their station, for example senators and freedwomen. See the numerous epigraphical and literary examples (and the laws enacted to attempt to prevent such instances) collected by EVANS-GRUBBS (1993): 'Marriage more shameful than adultery'. RAEPSAET-CHARLIER (1981): 'Clarissima femina' is of the opinion that new titles for the senatorial order like *clarissima femina*, by which women of the senatorial order were distinguished in the middle of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century AD, were the result of an increasing social mobility which resulted from marriages between partners of different social status, such as members of the senatorial order and *liberti*.



individuals and providing or organizing *spectacula* (gladiatorial games, chariot races and other theatrical entertainment) either with their own or with public money [Tert., *De Idol.* 17.3].

Many of the cults and religions which the Romans brought with them were easily assimilable with local equivalents, for example the cult of Juno Caelestis, the successor to the Punic Tanit. The cult of Ceres or the Cereres was popular, with seventeen priesthoods in Carthage alone, and the imperial cult had many priests serving individual emperor's cults or the imperial cult generally (Rives 1995: 58).

The high status of these official priests was indicated by visible signs of prestige such as the *toga praetexta* with purple border, and special seats in the theatres. Such status was sought after by the municipal élite, and like other municipal offices many local priesthoods were dominated by certain families within the city (Bassignano 1974: 375).<sup>62</sup> The most prestigious priesthood for a provincial was the *sacerdos provinciae*, who was elected by the representatives of the cities of the province (Rives 1995: 87).

With the dominance of Christianity bishops and clergy became highly influential in the circles of power particularly from the 5<sup>th</sup> century onwards, but their role as leaders and as patrons of the local Christian community is already exemplified as early as the 3<sup>rd</sup> century, for example by Cyprian (Bobertz 1988).

### Outside the urban élite

The urban and rural poor or peasants were divided into free men, *coloni*, and slaves, groups working as labourers or migrant workers, shopkeepers, servants and so on. Some were Romans, but most were of Punic or Libyan origin. For this part of the population the sponsorship of the wealthy (in the form of donations for banquets or food distributions and the building of baths, brothels and libraries) was a way of survival. Even for this group, however, some upward mobility was possible, especially in a changing political scene during the first centuries AD, again less so in the more stratified society of Late Antiquity. When they attained some success they moved further away from their tribal context, as can be seen in the names which they gave to their children - in the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> centuries one finds Libyan names only in the lowest (recording) status. It was thus possible (even though it must have been unusual) for a farm worker to become a member of his municipal council.<sup>63</sup> But such fortune was not common, and in all these periods the power of the most influential families usually prevailed. During the Late Empire an early form of the seigneurial system prevailed - rich landowners whose estates were worked by serf-like tenant farmers and seasonal workers, stood above law and order, and even used their tenants as small armies (Warmington 1955: 66).

Studies tend to concentrate on the members of the urbanized élite for the obvious reason that we have more evidence, although this does give undue prominence to what must in fact have been a minority. We also know more about freedmen and -women than about the freeborn poor, since their relationship with their former masters and mistresses is often attested by both parties in inscriptions, and it was also customary for freedmen and women to inscribe their change in status on stone. Some evidence also exists on women at the lower level of society working as nurses, midwives, artists, teachers, farm labour and various other forms of employment,

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<sup>62</sup> A point of view opposed by JACQUES (1984): *Le privilège de liberté*, 507-570; 618.

<sup>63</sup> An inscription from Mactaris [CIL 11824] testifies to the fact that a humble hard-working farm worker eventually rose to sit on the senate of his city and became censor.



since it was customary to inscribe these professions on tombstones. We know far less about what these professions actually entailed.

The exact extent to which the native populations were assimilated and to which Romanization affected the indigenous tribal customs and beliefs is difficult if not impossible to assess. Tribal communities who were independent of the cities or *civitates* were organized under the *praefectus gentis* or, with approval of Rome, under their *princeps gentis* or *rex gentis* (Bénabou 1976a: 450 *passim.*). But already before the arrival of the Romans there is evidence that the native Africans were receptive to some elements of Punic culture, and Punic remained the *lingua franca* for some of the North African towns and even villages (Law 1978: 203). Another example of cultural contamination can be seen in Libyan burial customs. Although the Libyans traditionally buried their dead painted red and in a squatting position, some of their tombs were decorated with tomb furniture in Punic fashion (Charles-Picard 1964: 88). The cult of the dead practised by Libyans is mentioned by Herodotus [4.172.3], who states that the Nasamones slept on the graves of their ancestors and saw their dreams as a form of divination. This African belief in the ancestral spirits visiting the dream world remained part of their culture, together with the introduction of new gods like the Punic-Roman Tanit-Juno<sup>64</sup> and Baal Hammon-Saturn (Brett and Fentress 1996: 49). Punic religion itself had already been influenced by the Greeks, for example in their depiction of Tanit, which owed much to the Greek cults of Hera and Demeter.<sup>65</sup>

Our knowledge of the vernacular languages is very limited, but it is probable that the common people soon developed a type of patois (Augustine's reference to Punic as the spoken language, for example, could refer to either Phoenician, Libyan, or a mixture).<sup>66</sup> Even in urban centres some features of the African and Punic cultures survived to mingle with the Roman: the *suffes* was originally a Punic magistracy which was retained in Roman times in over thirty communities from Lepcis Magna to Volubilis.<sup>67</sup> In Thugga even survivals of a Libyan magistracy from the 2<sup>nd</sup> century BC have been discovered: 'The use of the Libyan alphabet and language appears assertive and symbolic rather than functional . . . Outside the main centres of power, it was used for the tombstones of the tribal leaders' (Brett and Fentress 1996: 41). It seems that the practice of inscribing was copied from Punic and Roman tradition, since, as Bénabou (1976a: 479-480) notes, Libyan inscriptions are only found in centres where Punic and Roman inscriptions are also in evidence. Survivals of African and Punic religion continued until the 4<sup>th</sup> century when we see Augustine trying to eradicate the custom of holding feasts at the tombs of the dead [*Conf.* 6.2.2; *Ep.* 29.9]. The Carthaginians, true to their Phoenician descent, had been notorious in ancient times for the intensity of their religious beliefs and a tendency to henotheism, and this may possibly go some way to explaining the rapid spread of Christianity and the prevalence of fanaticism and

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<sup>64</sup> For the argument that Tanit is of Libyan origin, and non-Phoenician elements in her worship, see WARMINGTON (1969): *Carthage*, 59.

<sup>65</sup> This can be seen for example in the issuing of coinage, on which the portrait of Tanit is a replica of the Greek Demeter. See for example the illustrations and argument in WARMINGTON (1969): *Carthage*, 136-137; 145-146. Carthaginian coinage was cut to the Phoenician standard, however. See Diodorus Siculus [14.77] on the building of a temple to Demeter and Kore at Carthage after the army was struck by disease in Sicily (attributed to the destruction of the island's temples dedicated to these two goddesses). Further discussion of this aspect on p. 287.

<sup>66</sup> See the still relevant discussion in COURTOIS (1950): 'S. Augustine et la survivance de la punique' for a definition of 'Punic' in the time of Augustine.

<sup>67</sup> It is noticeable that many of the Punic institutions and practices have similarities with Greek and Roman equivalents: in political elections, for example, wealth and birth secured election although technically the citizen assemblies had electoral freedom (Warmington 1969: 142).



schisms in the African Church.

The Atlas mountain range and beyond did not interest the Romans apart from serving to secure their borders. Desert Libyan tribes were not Romanized and their social structures and lifestyle remained largely unaltered.<sup>68</sup>

While Romanization held temptations for the African aristocrats, soldiers and even the peasantry, it held no allure for the nomads. From a letter of Augustine [*Ep.* 119] written in 418 we learn that there are tribes who had at that time not been exposed to Christian teaching, and that the hill-villages spoke no Latin but a local dialect which Augustine calls 'Punic' [*Ep.* 84 and 209.2]. Around Hippo Regius it seems that the Donatists did attempt to convert the hill-villages, who later turned aggressively against the towns [Aug., *Ep.* 224.3]. During the first centuries of Roman rule the Roman army managed to keep rebellious tribes at bay,<sup>69</sup> but during the Vandal occupation of North Africa they developed into a more serious threat, which was not dispelled by the Byzantine reoccupation of some parts of Roman Africa in the 6<sup>th</sup> century.

## LATE ANTIQUITY, THE VANDAL AND BYZANTINE PERIOD<sup>70</sup>

### Decline of municipal dominance

The political and economic instability and confusion following the murder of Severus Alexander in 235, in which the soldier-emperor Maximinus was elevated to the throne, was also felt in the African provinces. Unhappy about the taxes levied from Rome, the senatorial and equestrian landowners in Africa armed their *coloni* and youth gangs to assassinate the emperor's procurator exercising his tax-collecting duties near Thysdrus. They then attempted to establish the local appointee to the governorship of Africa, the proconsul M. Antonius Gordianus Sempronianus, as emperor in 238. But the legion at Lambaesis sided unquestioningly with the Roman emperor, Maximinus, defeated Gordianus and his son, and exercised a purge of the local municipal aristocracy (Law 1978: 205; Shaw 1983: 148). These bloody reprisals against the propertied status group, in addition to many other factors, brought about a situation which reduced the strength of the wealthy urban aristocracy by the 4<sup>th</sup> century AD. A measure of continuity for Roman institutions in African cities can be argued (Lepelley (1979-81),<sup>71</sup> since we know for example that Augustine was the son of a decurion in Thagaste [*Conf.* 2.3.5], but men like this 'would find [themselves] dwarfed by the great *nouveaux riches* and bullied by Imperial officials' (Brown 1967: 25). The municipal élite just became less significant in the overall power structure, although it continued to function, often in consort with largesse from the emperor and his representatives. Some outward recovery can for example be seen under the reign of Diocletian when a number

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<sup>68</sup> On North African tribes during the Roman period see the work by SHAW (1979): 'The camel in North Africa and the Sahara: history, biology and human economy'; (1981a): 'Climate, environment and history: the case of Roman North Africa'; (1982b): 'Fear and loathing: the nomad menace and Roman Africa'; (1982/3): '“Eaters of flesh, drinkers of milk”: the ancient Mediterranean ideology of the pastoral nomad'; (1986): 'Autonomy and tribute: mountain and plain in Mauretania Tingitana' and also BRETT AND FENTRESS (1996): *The Berbers*.

<sup>69</sup> We are told by the *Scriptores Historiae Augustae* [*Sept. Sev.* 18.3] and by Aurelius Victor [20.19] that Septimius Severus fought and won against ferocious and warlike tribes near Lepcis Magna.

<sup>70</sup> The best survey of the Vandal period in Africa is still COURTOIS (1955): *Les Vandales et l'Afrique*, updated in 1966 by DIESNER: *Das Vandalenreich, Aufstieg und Niedergang*. The Byzantine period in Africa is covered in DIEHL's classic *L'Afrique Byzantine* (1944), and more recently in DIESNER (1964): *Der Untergang der römischen Herrschaft in Nord Afrika*; CAMERON (1982): 'Byzantine Africa' deals with the literary evidence for this period in Africa and HUMPHREYS (1980): 'Vandal and Byzantine Carthage' with archaeological evidence for the Vandal and Byzantine period in Africa.

<sup>71</sup> LEPELLEY (1979-81): *Les cités de l'Afrique romaine au Bas-Empire* points out that the decay of Roman North Africa has been overestimated and that municipal institutions survived, while populations in the cities remained stable during Late Antiquity.



of temples and aqueducts were restored, but henceforth the area of monumental building was to pass to Byzantine forts and basilicas, and much private money was spent on the enhancement of homes on individual estates which were decorated with magnificent mosaics. On these private estates conditions had changed as the peasants (part of the large mass of *humiliores*) were more subject to the will of the landlord, inviolable as a member of the *honestiores*. Their freedom was increasingly inhibited by laws which tied them to the land.<sup>72</sup> These *coloni* or tenant farmers donated one third of their crops and a specified number of working days to the landowner or his manager (*vilicus*).

The influence of Christianity also affected Roman African society from the 3<sup>rd</sup> century onwards, and religious schisms are an integral part of the social and cultural divisions which existed in these provinces. Donatism began as a point of dissent between African bishops, following from the persecution of AD 303-305, when some of the clergy had 'lapsed' by surrendering the Scriptures. The more radical of these, eventually named as the followers Donatus, refused to acknowledge the consecration of such *lapsi* as bishops, and instead elected their own representatives. The representatives of orthodox Catholicism were also not thought supportive enough of the martyrs (most probably because the latter drew a following and those who survived assumed an authority resented by these bishops). Donatism grew into an expression of social and political discontent,<sup>73</sup> essentially in opposition to the Catholic Christianity of the emperor of Rome, and expressed through the resistance of the Numidian church of Donatus. This development emphasized the weakening hold of the Roman towns on the less Romanized inhabitants of the rural areas. The Donatist schism attracted the lower status groups of the towns and was most particularly (at times even violently) supported by indigenous African peoples (especially in the interior of the Roman provinces) during the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> centuries, for example the Circumcellions, the 'wandering monks of Donatism' (Brown 1972: 283).<sup>74</sup> The rise of Donatism coincided with a revival of Berber art, for example (Brown 1972: 245; 282), and certain features of Donatism, such as the fanatical regard for martyrdom and the martyrs, are claimed to have their roots in the ancestor worship of the native Libyans and Mauri.<sup>75</sup> Revolts of Mauri chieftains such as Firmus (372-5) and Gildo (398) were enthusiastically supported by the Donatists. The Donatists were vigorously challenged by Augustine and underwent occasional persecutions which only ended with the arrival of the Vandals, but Donatism persisted into the Muslim period. In 429 the Vandals, along with some of the Goths, notably the Alani, arrived in Africa under their king Geiseric,<sup>76</sup> some 80 000 individuals including women and children.<sup>77</sup> They established their ascendancy over

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<sup>72</sup> Epigraphical evidence indicates that large estates were farmed by *coloni* and not by slaves. On this see CARLSEN (1991): 'Estate management in Roman North Africa', 637.

<sup>73</sup> A movement comparable in many respects with the Monophysite Coptic and Syrian churches or Nestorianism.

<sup>74</sup> The Donatist movement cannot be equated with a class struggle between the nomads and the landed aristocracy, a theory mooted by FREND (1942): 'Note on the Berber background in the life of Augustine', however, since many well-born and well educated members of society were also Donatists (Christides 2000: 14). On the Circumcellions see a balanced overview of the contemporary evidence by BALDWIN (1962): 'Peasant revolt in Africa in the Later Roman Empire'.

<sup>75</sup> In this work, *Religion and society in the age of St Augustine* (1972), BROWN refines upon the views of Frend, who maintains that Donatism is simply an expression of the native Berber identity, in which the Circumcellions are the precursors of the *marabouts*. Gsell and Gautier (Brown 1972: 281) argue instead for the vitality of the Punic or Semitic foundation of African civilization, which had closer ties with Judaeo-Christian and Arab religion than with pagan Roman religion and explain the success of Christian Donatism in this way. All references in Brown (1972).

<sup>76</sup> The king was officially titled *rex Vandalarum et Alanorum*, from which one would assume that the Alani played a more prominent role than the one accredited to them in the sources. Procopius relates that the Alani and the other barbarians except the Moors were united under the name of the Vandals [*De Bell. Vand.* 3.5.21]. For the purposes of the present study, therefore, the term 'Vandal' will be taken



the local population, eventually making Carthage their headquarters. The Vandals had two primary aims: to find land for their people and to ensure the supremacy of their Arian sect.<sup>78</sup> This meant that their impact was felt mostly by the propertied classes, and especially by the Catholic and Donatist clergy. The picture of wholesale destruction painted by Victor of Vita reflects the Catholic alarm at the Arian arrival rather than a complete disruption of African society under Vandal rule.<sup>79</sup> There is archaeological support for the destruction of some of the churches as far West as Iol Caesarea (Potter 1995: 49; 79), but many aspects of Roman municipal politics, entertainment and education continued (Clover 1982a: 12). Luxorius mentions performances at the amphitheatre at Carthage, and the usual racing teams [*Epigr.* 20]. The *Albertini Tablets* discovered South of Tebessa provide evidence for a 'literate and prosperous rural population, still operating under the terms of rural law' (Potter 1995: 19).<sup>80</sup> Inevitably many of the owners of large estates were affected by the Vandal conquest. Under Vandal rule the *sortes Wandalarum* was instituted whereby the Vandal warriors received land allotments in Africa Proconsularis free of tax, and the Vandal king and his followers took similar allotments in Byzacene and eastern Numidia,<sup>81</sup> in part consisting of the land confiscated from wealthy Roman landowners [Isid., *Hist. Goth.* 83; Procop., *De Bell. Vand.* 3.5.11-15]. Some of the African Romans went into exile from where they attempted to persuade the emperors to reconquer Africa.<sup>82</sup> Those who remained were subject to penalties resuscitated from the reign of the Tetrarchy by Huneric in 484, but in spite of these changes the municipal aristocracy did not die out altogether, since it appears that the Vandals preferred to leave things as they were on a local level (Clover 1982a: 5). Thrasamund tried to win over the Catholics with bribes and τιμαῖς τε καὶ ἀρχαῖς ('with honours and offices') [Procop., *De Bell. Vand.* 3.8.9], a rather unspecific comment but which clearly indicates some assimilation of the locals into the élite class. Inscriptions from the 5<sup>th</sup> century continued to praise African proconsuls - who had become attached to the Vandal court - in a time when even Rome had been subjected to barbarian invasion [Salvian, *De Gub. Dei* 7.16]. The Vandals themselves did not escape Roman influence.<sup>83</sup>

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to refer to all the Germanic peoples who came to North Africa in the 5<sup>th</sup> century.

<sup>77</sup> According to Procopius [*De Anek.* 18.5] this figure takes only the army into account. Victor of Vita [1.2] says that the figure included women and children. COURTOIS (1955): *Les Vandales et l'Afrique*, 215-217, concludes that since the figure was based on a headcount of the people for whom Geiseric had to provide ships to take them to Africa from Gibraltar, it must have included women and children.

<sup>78</sup> The basis for the Arian sect was the belief in the divinity of the Father but not of the Son (Wallace-Hadrill 1967: 23 *passim*). It seems likely that the Vandals, like the other Germanic Arians, found a corporate identity in Arianism to which they were probably converted in the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> centuries by individuals like Ulfila and Valens, but they did not make any distinctive contribution to Arian thought (Wiles 1996: 42-50).

<sup>79</sup> Possidius, Augustine's biographer, also tells us that only three churches escaped Vandal destruction - at Hippo, Cirta and Carthage. Today these accounts, which gave rise to the term 'vandalism', are taken to be much exaggerated (Frend 1978: 479), and it is indeed likely that the tales 'vandalism' are likely to reflect anti-Arian bias rather than historical reality in relating the magnitude of the destruction.

<sup>80</sup> The *Lex Manciana*. It is quite possible that this was the land which according to Procopius was not assessed as 'good' by the Vandals, and while local owners were allowed to retain it, they were so heavily taxed on it that 'nothing whatever remained on those who retained their farms' [*De Bell. Vand.* 3.5.15].

<sup>81</sup> See Victor Vitensis 1.13 and 3.4; Procopius, *De Bell. Vand.* 3.5.11-15.

<sup>82</sup> According to Zachariah of Mitylene these exiled aristocrats persuaded Justinian to reconquer Africa by singing the praises of her wealth [*The Syriac Chronicle known as that of Zachariah of Mitylene*, translated by F.J. Hamilton and E.W. Brooks (London 1899) 262]

<sup>83</sup> Even Catholicism had some impact on the Vandals. Some cases of Vandal 'confessors' are recorded by Victor of Vita and there is evidence for Vandal burials at Catholic churches at Ammaedara and Mactaris (Courtois 1955: 386-7). Bright supports the thesis put forward by Kuijper in 1958 that the poet Blossius Aemilius Dracontius may have had a Vandal mother, and that it was his Vandal connections which saved him from immediate execution when his poetry referred more flatteringly to another ruler than to the Vandal king. He and his family did, however, spend many years in captivity (Bright 1987: 17).



Their own culture was essentially illiterate,<sup>84</sup> but they adopted the Latin language and script for coinage and inscriptions, and a surprisingly large number of Latin works (the quality of much of which is described as 'appalling' by Bright 1987) emanates from Africa during their hundred year rule.<sup>85</sup> Even the legendary Roman decadence affected the Vandals, and, although Salvian would have his readers believe that the Vandals were pillars of moral rectitude, other sources paint a different picture. Malchus of Philadelphia<sup>86</sup> remarks that after Huneric's accession the Vandal rulers fell 'into every moral weakness', and Procopius [*De Bell. Vand.* 4.6.6-8] describes the Vandals enthusiastically taking to the baths, clothing themselves in silks and gold, and spending a lot of time in the theatres and hippodromes. These descriptions are further supported by the evidence of Luxorius and of archaeology (the occupation of luxurious villas by Vandal nobles).<sup>87</sup> In the late Vandal period archaeology gives evidence of a general decay of public buildings in urban centres such as Carthage, Tipasa and Iol Caesarea, and even private buildings were in sharp decline (Potter 1995: 49).<sup>88</sup> It would seem that this decline would have made the task of Belisarius an easier one. Those Vandals who survived the Byzantine conquest were assimilated with the northern African populations without a trace. In conclusion of their reign, Frend (1978: 481) states: 'Of all the Germanic kingdoms that established themselves in the Western empire during the fifth century, the legacy of the Vandals was the least'.

Diehl's thesis (1944) that the Byzantine occupation of Africa was of a superficial nature which served only to facilitate the later Arab conquest, despite calls for re-examination (Cameron 1982: 29), has not yet been seriously contested. The Empire was unable to sustain the territorial expansions made under Justinian, and while the African provinces were able to hold out for one and a half centuries, they were spent in long and exhausting wars against the African tribes and arguing religious differences<sup>89</sup> with Byzantium, which resulted in the exarch of Carthage, Gregorius, declaring himself an independent ruler from Tripoli to Tingis with a new capital at Sbeitla (Christides 2000: 40).<sup>90</sup> His role was terminated by the first of the Arab invasions in 647, the beginning of the end of Roman Africa. Attempts by Constantinople to regain control of the African provinces and impose taxes were rebuffed (Christides 2000: 43). By this time most of the outlying areas - the Aurès, Tripolitania and the western province of Tingitana were already strongholds of tribal chiefs, where only odd remnants of Roman culture survived. Procopius relates for example that after the Byzantine conquest one of the local chiefs requested client king status and honours (the Roman attributes of a silver gilt staff, silver headdress and white robe and gold shoes), so that his authority would be accepted by his own subjects [*De Bell. Vand.* 3.25.4-8]. The Byzantine rulers continued the Roman practice of awarding official status to tribal leaders

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<sup>84</sup> Procopius refers to a Roman African scribe, Boniface, used in the house of Gelimer [*De Bell. Vand.* 4.4.33].

<sup>85</sup> For examples see BRIGHT (1987): *The miniature epic in Vandal Africa*. Of Dracontius, however, Bright says that his work displays 'a wide learning in both Greek and Latin letters showing how much his era and his culture were at the crossroads of ancient and medieval, pagan and Christian, Roman and barbarian' (1987: ix-x).

<sup>86</sup> *Excerpta historica iussu Imp. Constantini Porphyrogenitii confecta*, edited by C. de Boor (Berlin 1903). Vol 1, Part 2: *Excerpta de legationibus gentium ad Romanos*, 573.

<sup>87</sup> *Anthologia Latina* 304, 305 and 346 - one villa belonged to Fridamal, and another had its own amphitheatre. A villa next to the Plage d'Amilcar was still occupied by its Vandal owners towards the end of the 5<sup>th</sup> century (Clover 1982a: 8 n.46).

<sup>88</sup> But at some centres, such as Ammaedara, Theveste and Hippo, building continued unabated (Mahjoubi *et al* 1981: 501).

<sup>89</sup> North Africa supported Orthodoxy and was backed by the Church of Rome, while Constantinople advocated Monotheletism (a hybrid of Orthodoxy and Monophysitism). The complexities of this struggle and its religious character are beyond the scope of this thesis.

<sup>90</sup> See DUVAL (1991): 'Grégoire et l'Église d'Afrique' and the bibliography provided on 'Gregory' in the *ODB*, 1324-1325.



such as Iavdas in the Aures, Guenfan, Antalas and Coutzina in the Tunisian Steppes and to Carcazan in Tripolitania, making them the equivalent of vassal rulers over territories awarded to them (Mahjoubi *et al* 1981: 507). Christianization of the indigenous tribes also continued. By the reign of Justinian even the Garamantes of the Fezzān had been Christianized (Christides 2000: 13).

Unfortunately for the purposes of this study the ancient sources present us with essentially military history and very little attention is paid to describing social structures and developments during this period. However, the most important cultural element to be noted in the reoccupation of Africa is that the Byzantine administrators were essentially orientalized and Greek-speaking, to judge from the use of contemporary seals (Cameron 1982: 14), unlike the western, Latin-speaking Roman Africans.<sup>91</sup> To some extent the Byzantines must have been more foreign to the African Romans than the Vandals with whom they had been living for the past 100 years. We have some idea of the difference between the African Romans and the Byzantines since Procopius tells us that Belisarius had to remind his soldiers that the Africans were also Romans [*De Bell. Vand.*, 3.16.3 and 3.20.19]. The Byzantines were also referred to as 'Greeks' (τοὺς Γραικοὺς) [*De Bell. Vand.* 4.27.38]. Belisarius' army as well as administrators appointed by the Byzantines were all Greek-speaking, but an estimate of the number of Greek-speakers in Africa at this time remains inconclusive.<sup>92</sup> Since the Byzantines were not an occupying force in the traditional sense, being seen as coming to the rescue of the Roman Africans rather than as their enemy, it is likely that close relations between the local population and the soldiers and officers developed over time (Christides 2000: 23).

Under Byzantine rule the face of urban life was irrevocably changed. Justinian ordered the restoration of property confiscated by the Vandals which was returned to individuals and to the Orthodox Catholics, who lost no time in launching a persecution of the Arians in their turn (Wallace-Hadrill 1967: 40). But the spoliation of the older buildings had already been authorized as early as 397 [*Cod. Theod.* 15.1.36; 10.3] and fortresses were erected over civic centres, as for example at Thugga. Christides (2000: 15) notes that, apart from the erection of some magnificent churches in Byzantine Africa, buildings during this period, and houses in particular, were constructed on a smaller scale than previously.

Procopius comments on the depopulation of Africa [*De Anek.* 18.4] although it is possible that this refers more specifically to urban areas, since the Segermes Survey indicates (although the authors offer no explanation) that rural settlement numbers peak during the 4<sup>th</sup> to 6<sup>th</sup> centuries around Carthage (Dietz *et al* 1995). In *De Bello Vandalico* [4.23.27], however, Procopius specifically states that due to the raids of the barbarians, the countryside became deserted, many fleeing to the cities, others to Sicily and the islands, and the notables to Byzantium, which it would seem, was still seen as a bastion of civilization for Roman culture. Arabic sources

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<sup>91</sup> Here only the élite class is meant. See the comments by CLOVER (1982a): 'Carthage and the Vandals', 11, on the Greek and Eastern element already present in Carthage among the general population. It must also be remembered that while there was a strong Greek-speaking element at Byzantium, Justinian, who was himself an Illyrian and Latin-speaking (Wallace-Hadrill 1967: 39), had the majority of his law codes written in Latin (some of the *Novellae* appear in Greek), and it is only under Heraclius (601-641) that the language at the court of Constantinople officially becomes Greek. BALDWIN (1985): 'Latin in Byzantium', 237, comments 'The Byzantines thought of themselves as Romans living in the New Rome - the Queen City. They had no emotional objection to Latin as the barbarous language of a philistine conqueror: *Graecia victa ferum* ... does not come into it'.

<sup>92</sup> On the impact of the Greek-speaking newcomers on Africa see CAMERON (1993b): 'The Byzantine reconquest of N. Africa and the impact of Greek culture'. The whole Byzantine army under Justinian numbered 150 000 [Agathias 5.13.7-8] but no estimates are known for the individual provinces.

report, for example, that the inhabitants of Oea possessed many ships with which they attempted to escape the Arab invasion (Christides 2000: 13-14), which supports the impression that wealthy landowners and landlords, traders and merchants had continued to prosper in the 'golden age of Byzantine navigation and international maritime trade', essentially the 6<sup>th</sup> to the mid-7<sup>th</sup> centuries.

A puzzling question which remains unanswered is why, apart from the monument ruins, no cultural traces of Graeco-Roman civilization remained after the Arab invasion, even though the Romans had been present in North Africa for seven centuries. The answer to this question lies at least partly in the fact that Roman civilization was never completely taken up by the indigenous population, certainly not in the rural areas. In addition to this Abun-Nasr (1971: 65) mentions that the culture of the Arabs was more akin to that of the Berbers than Roman culture had ever been, while it was also accompanied by a dynamic religion which proved so popular that by the 12<sup>th</sup> century no indigenous Christians remained in the area.<sup>93</sup>



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<sup>93</sup> On this see SAVAGE (1995): 'Conversion or metamorphosis: the Christian population after the Islamic conquest'.



**PART II**

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**WOMEN'S TRADITIONAL ROLE:  
SYMBOL AND REALITY**

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## CHAPTER 3

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# PRECEDENTS AND INFLUENCES: WOMEN'S PRIVATE ROLE IN FIVE ANCIENT CULTURES

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The term 'private life' can be interpreted very broadly - Veyne in his *History of private life* (1987) includes under this definition for example all business activities on the grounds that in antiquity no large corporations existed and all finances were private - or very narrowly, in including only relationships within the nuclear family and those aspects of life that took place within the *domus*, even though they may have had repercussions and reflections outside this orbit. In this and the following five chapters only the narrower meaning of private life will come under discussion. The following sections in this chapter set out some of the main aspects of the Roman, African, Punic, Vandal and Byzantine cultures in this regard, since it was essentially these five civilizations and their attitudes to women which affected, in different proportions, the way in which women's lives were shaped in Roman Africa. Most attention will be paid to the Roman traditions and mores, since it is chiefly these which are reflected in our Roman African evidence for women. This chapter also presented many methodological complexities, since some of the source material fell outside my own area of expertise. For the Arabic sources on North Africa, which were closest in time to the period under consideration, I was dependent largely on the evaluations of other scholars. The Graeco-Roman sources were clearly writing from their own cultural perspective with regard to the African, Punic and Germanic cultures, while modern African assessments of their continent's history are also often suspect in terms of cultural bias. The following pages are therefore designed to give an overview of the available evidence and, where possible, highlight some of the difficulties of interpretation.



## THE TRADITION AT ROME<sup>1</sup>

### A woman's position in the family

The only viable career for a Roman woman of élite status before the advent of Christian ascetism was marriage and children, and her relationship with her husband and his family and especially her own children were the focal points of the Roman matron's existence.<sup>2</sup> At no point during Roman history were citizen women seen as independent of their family and their lives were legally and socially determined by it. By law, all Roman women were subject to *tutela* or guardianship of a *paterfamilias*, usually either their fathers, their husbands or their husbands' fathers, whose permission had to be sought in the making of certain financial or legal transactions.<sup>3</sup> The Roman *tutela* relaxed slightly in its practical effect from the 1<sup>st</sup> century AD onwards (Rawson 1991: 28), since from this time it became more customary for women to remain in the control of their fathers rather than passing into the control of their husbands or their fathers-in-law upon marriage, an improvement for women which was achieved without defying the hierarchical and patriarchal construction of family authority - male *potestas* over the woman was not challenged, only whose *potestas*.<sup>4</sup> It may be considered an improvement firstly because it gave a woman more immediate freedom, as she did not live in the same house as her guardian, and secondly in that the death of her father was also likely to occur before that of her husband, upon which she would be freed from *tutela*, unless her father appointed another guardian.<sup>5</sup> Being subject to such a *tutor* does not seem to have been of great significance in inhibiting her freedom - Dixon (1988: 89) goes so far as to say that by the end of the 1<sup>st</sup> century AD *tutela* was no more than a formal requirement, 'no more onerous than the need to collect witnesses to a signature'. A freeborn woman who had married *sine manu* and whose father died or emancipated her could own property independently and separately from that of her husband (Saller 1984a: 196). In effect then, *sine manu* marriages made the Roman matron's position in the marital home an ambiguous one, since she did not legally belong to the same *familia* as her husband and children and was to some extent an independent economic entity within her married home.<sup>6</sup> Socially she was associated with her husband and children, for example in the fact that she was absorbed into her husband's physical home and put herself under the protection of her husband's Lar, and that she took the status of her husband when she married (and did not

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<sup>1</sup> A number of excellent works on Roman women's role within the family have appeared fairly recently, for example DIXON (1990) and (1992) on the Roman mother and the Roman family, TREGGIARI (1991) on Roman marriage, as well as specialized articles in the volumes edited by BRADLEY (1991): *Discovering the Roman family*, RAWSON (1986): *The family in ancient Rome* and (1991): *Marriage, divorce and children* and RAWSON AND WEAVER (1997): *The Roman family in Italy*.

<sup>2</sup> While marriage was the norm for most women regardless of status, some women, probably more than the evidence indicates, also worked for a living, either in their own right or by their husbands' side, and their career options will be considered in Chapter 9.

<sup>3</sup> Guardianship for women is discussed by most authors on Roman women. For a detailed definition of *tutela mulierum* see DIXON (1992a): *The Roman mother*, 43-46; TREGGIARI (1991a): *Roman marriage*, 65-68; 381.

<sup>4</sup> Such marriages with *manus*, according to the *Institutiones* [1.110-111] of Gaius, were abolished as well as falling out of use. The reasons for this change have not yet been satisfactorily explained, but see CROOK (1967): *Law and life of Rome*, 103-104, and POMEROY (1975): *Goddesses, whores...*, 155, who feel that the decreased number of Roman men after the Punic Wars and the increase in women's wealth as a result were at least partly responsible. The agnatic line thus endeavoured to retain some control over the wealth of their daughters. Tacitus mentions [*Ann.* 4.16] that under Tiberius marriages with *manus* were once again introduced in instances when the husband occupied religious office.

<sup>5</sup> The argument that pre-industrial mortality made it possible for many sons to avoid having to live under the *potestas* of a father is voiced by VEYNE (1978): 'La famille et l'amour', 37 - obviously the same advantages must have applied to daughters.

<sup>6</sup> The Roman matron in a *sine manu* marriage could not inherit or bequeath from/to her husband or her children until the end of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century AD. POMEROY (1975): *Goddesses, whores...*, 162, consequently sees the later period as instrumental in identifying a woman with her husband and children rather than with the family of her birth.



retain that of her father). She belonged, yet was independent. These changes are important for our understanding of women's role and position in Roman society and any development towards a greater autonomy. Lastly, a woman's authority and independence were also profoundly affected by the stage of life in which she found herself - as daughter, wife or widow - which played a vital role in determining her independence and the quality of her life (the significance of which was even indicated by different forms of dress).<sup>7</sup>

### **The idealization of the woman's role by Roman society**

Throughout the period under discussion the gender ideal for women rooted in their role as wives and mothers remained relatively consistent to what it had been in Republican Rome. This can partly be explained by the fact that the Romans through whom this image was transmitted were educated by reading the Greek and Roman Classics right up to the 7<sup>th</sup> century and beyond. When it came to virtues and *mores* these sources themselves had a tradition of harking back to the ideals apparently embodied by Cornelia, mother of the Gracchi, which were upheld for women until the end of Roman history.<sup>8</sup> The Roman *matrona* was expected to be chaste and modest and never cause her husband a moment's concern, bear children who would be a credit to the Romans, and devote herself to their interests and the domestic concerns of her family. One of the most explicit expressions of a Roman matron's virtues can be found in the *Laudatio Turiae*, a lengthy epitaph from the 1<sup>st</sup> century BC:

*Domestica bona pudici[t]iae, opsequi, comitatis, facilitatis, lanificii stud[i, religionis] sine superstitione, o[r]natus non conspiciendi, cultus modici cur [memorem? Cur dicam de tuorum cari]tate, familiae pietate, [c]um aequae matrem meam ac tuos parentes col[ueris eandemque quietem] illi quam tuis curaveris cetera innumerabilia habueris commun[ia cum omnibus] matronis dignam f[a]mam colentibus?*

Why should I mention your domestic virtues: your loyalty, obedience, affability, reasonableness, industry in working wool, religion without superstition, sobriety of attire, modesty of appearance? Why dwell on your love for your relatives, your devotion to your family? You have shown the same attention to my mother as you did to your own parents, and have taken care to secure an equally peaceful life for her as you did for your own people, and you have innumerable other merits in common with all married women who care for their good name.<sup>9</sup>

[*Laud. Turiae* 30-34]

Even the advent of Christianity did little to alter this image of the female virtues, adding only a new nuance to the status of virginity and widowhood, and to the adjective *pietissima*, already in pagan times probably the most often cited virtue for both men and women on their tombstones.

While the use of this ideal image in literature and on tombstones allowed for some individuality, for example an educated woman, or one who had other talents, the essential ideal remained ever constant, its opposite a weapon in the hands of critics. Fathers and husbands who took credit for their virtuous womenfolk were also held responsible for their transgressions.<sup>10</sup> It was therefore important for a man to be able to portray his wife

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<sup>7</sup> On the various dress codes for young girls, married women, mothers and widows in Roman society, see SEBESTA (1994): 'Symbolism in the costume'.

<sup>8</sup> The widowed Cornelia earned the praise of writers because she devoted herself to her household and her children, culminating in the fact that even after her husband's death she remained an *univira*, rejecting a marriage proposal from Ptolemy of Egypt [Plut., *Tib. Gr.* 1.3-1.4]. Remarriage at her age - she could hardly have been a young widow, having born 12 children - would probably have been a political manoeuvre rather than anything else.

<sup>9</sup> Only 'Turia's' role as a mother is not mentioned in this encomium, since it becomes clear later that the couple were unable to have children.

<sup>10</sup> Cicero [*Pro Sext. Rosc. Am.* 50.147] tells us that the respectable woman derives honour from her distinguished male relatives, but she also honours them in return by her virtuous reputation. Conversely, of course, a woman who appeared to be of loose morals could be used in attempts to damage the family honour. Ancient authors are quick to point out a woman straying from the path of virtue when



as a model of chastity and modesty, since his own reputation was affected by it, as discussed in Chapter 1.

### **How did a woman's virtues become so idealized?**

At the heart of this issue lies the fact that status and power were largely based on landed wealth and the secure transmission of property was of vital importance in maintaining family status.<sup>11</sup> Descent was through the male line, and to preserve the purity of this line a woman's chastity was of crucial importance. Roman citizens married for the purpose of legitimately transferring their name and their property to their descendants, and Roman fathers gave their daughters and dowries to develop links of power and status with other families. In the most clinical terms then, marriage was a merger between two families, in which the main issue was the initial transfer of property that was enacted by the dowry, and to produce heirs to inherit the family property and carry on the family name. The only contract involved the bride's dowry. Much as in the case of modern 'mergers', marriages tended to take place between men and women who were of equal social standing in terms of wealth and birth. The consolidation of property interests was paramount for those classes which possessed substantial means, and ideal values such as virginity and chastity were upheld especially by the propertied status group, since they underpinned the legitimate transfer of property. Women of élite status were therefore usually subject to greater conservatism in norms of behaviour, where women in the lower echelons of society were more arbitrarily influenced by factors such as variations in financial status, occupation, legal status and geographical situation. During the Imperial period, however, the ideal virtues were gradually adopted by such lower status groups, for example freedmen and women, who had become more affluent, and who strove to imitate the conventions of the élite.

While the ideal virtues for women are generally propagated by male authors, and one may receive the impression that Roman men were eager to enforce these morals on their wives and daughters,<sup>12</sup> women themselves perpetuated this value-system since they also saw this as a key to status and recognition by the men and women of the society to which they belonged.<sup>13</sup>

### **Ideal and reality**

Like most other Mediterranean societies, a discrepancy exists between what is promoted as the ideological model of sex and gender, and what we know to be actual social practice. Cohen (1991: 114) sees the reality as a kind of façade management, according to which the individual could manage appearances 'based on [her]

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wishing to criticize the men associated with them. Good examples are Sallust on Sempronia [*Catilina* 25], or Plutarch on Fulvia [*Antonius* 10]. Whether such slurs had any tangible effect is another matter.

<sup>11</sup> This is the basic model developed by GOODY (1983): *The development of the family and marriage in Europe*, for all Eurasian societies.

<sup>12</sup> The ancient view of woman as having great sexual appetites and being of lesser moral fibre than men can also be explained in this context: 'Male ideology constrains men to view their wives in this way [as sexually licentious deceivers] because of the enormous fear of the power of female sexuality to ruin them, and because of the difficulties in control, since male honor also requires that men spend their time out of the house, in the company of other men.' (Cohen 1991: 119). Under Constantine the right to prosecute adultery was restricted to the family, thereby making the husband formally responsible for the sanctity of marriage [*Cod. Theod.* 9.7.2].

<sup>13</sup> The most obvious example of this is the forms of dress adopted by women. Some Roman texts attest to hierarchies of status among Roman *matronae*, for example the mocking reference to female issues of precedence in the *Scriptores Historiae Augustae* [*Elagab.* 4.4]. The issue is usually dismissed on the grounds that the life of Elagabalus is wildly exaggerated, but the women's senate is taken seriously by NICOLS (1989): 'Gender and civic patronage, 124-125 and also by HEMELRIJK (1999): *Matrona docta*, 13-14, the latter somewhat more cautiously.



knowledge of the conventional ways of drawing inferences from certain types of conduct'. The most important part of a woman's reputation was that she was *seen* or *believed* to be chaste.

Recovering the reality behind the façade is, however, problematic. Since praise for women is intrinsically connected to an ideal image designed to preserve the honour of her family, it is not often that one finds a woman praised for other qualities. In the few cases where women were given recognition for being learned, or possessing some particular skill, they are always described at the same time as falling within the other norms of female behaviour, and posing no threat to gender limitations and ideals.

Happily, however, the case is not hopeless and there are a number of references in the sources to women's lives that do not conform to the ideal. In Chapters 4 to 7 questions will be asked about the realities of women's lives as wives and mothers, and to what extent the ideal virtues associated with these roles in Rome were used to exemplify the Roman ideal of family life in Africa. Were Roman ideals for womanhood held up as something to be attained in the process of Romanization, or did they already exist among the Romanized people of northern Africa? In short, what made the Roman ideal for women particularly Roman in Africa?

### **Late Antiquity**

Some general works on women and the family in Late Antiquity which have appeared recently have highlighted a number of altered conditions for Roman women living in this period.<sup>14</sup> The Christianization of the Empire brought about certain changes both in public and private life. Nathan (2000: 11) claims that there was a paradigmatic shift in the overall conception of the family and that its expression was reflected in the new moral and legal restrictions on family functioning. A large number of laws regulating marriage, child custody, adultery, prostitution and so on appeared from the time of Constantine, and were under constant revision by successive emperors in what Clark (1993: 26) terms an 'extraordinary sequence of restriction and concession' regarding women. The emperors of Rome and Constantinople themselves increasingly assumed the role of guardians of private morality.

A woman was no longer obliged to marry, since she could consecrate her life to god, either as a virgin or as a widow. The Church functioned as a surrogate *tutor*, replacing male authority and leaving consecrated virgins and widows free of personal tutelage but under some form of protection. But if her father had chosen a husband for her, a girl could only refuse if her father's choice was unworthy in status or behaviour [*Dig.* 23.1.11-12]. A woman became legally independent on the death of her father and the formal *tutela mulierum* fell into disuse completely. The dowry remained traditional, but while gifts between husband and wife had been prohibited before, a 'nuptial donation' from the groom to the bride as a further security for the bride now became customary and which, by the time of Justinian, equalled the dowry in value (Clark 1993: 17). Certain ideals for womanly virtue remained constant, since their virtue was still the insurance for legitimate transfer of property. Private women's rooms are spoken of, for example in one of Sidonius of Apollinaris' letters [2.2] - he mentions a ladies' dining room and another separate room where female servants could eat. Standards of modesty in dress revealed even less of the body than had been the case previously, and nudity was something shameful in a

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<sup>14</sup> Most particularly NATHAN (2000): *Family in Late Antiquity* generally and CLARK (1993): *Women in Late Antiquity* on women; BROWN (1987): *Late Antiquity* gives an informative general overview of social history during this period.



general Christian denigration of the body.

## THE EVIDENCE OF AFRICAN CULTURES

In contrast to the explicitly patriarchal origins of Roman society, some scholars argue for a more matriarchal system in the African context. It must be emphasized right at the outset, however, that all evidence for such a phenomenon, whether convincing or debatable, derives from parts of Africa which fall outside the geographical parameters of this study. There appears to be some evidence for the theory that early matriarchal cultures existed in the eastern part of the northern African continent in the prevalence of matrilinearity, which also occurs across the rest of the African continent further south (Loth 1987: 27-34). The study by Williams and Finch (1984) covering the period 1000 BC to AD 1000 for Aethiopian<sup>15</sup> queens finds female rule far more common in what they define as 'northern Africa' than elsewhere in the ancient world, but their study is essentially limited to ancient East Africa, and they present no evidence of female rule for the western areas.<sup>16</sup> Remaining in East Africa the matriarchate is known from Nubian civilization [Nicolaus Dam., *FHG* 142; Diod. Sic. 1.33] and these literary references are supported by archaeological evidence in the relative prominence given to the Candaces<sup>17</sup> rather than to their male consorts in Meroitic reliefs (Bates 1970: 112 n.2; Leclant 1976: 89-132). Great building projects were launched in Nubia by the Meroitic queens, producing palaces and tombs which are fine examples of Meroitic art. The most famous 'Aethiopian' queen who did not rule merely as a wife or widow was the legendary Yemenite Queen of Sheba, famous from her romance with King Solomon [*1 Kings* 10]. All this evidence, however, takes us more and more eastward.

Scholars have pointed to what they believe to be traces of matriarchy in modern-day North Africa. In Libya the Imushagh explain 'their abstention from fish, birds and edible lizards on the score that these (totemic) animals are 'their mothers' brothers', a form of expression which Bates defines as 'emphatically matriarchal' (1970: 112) because of the emphasis on the 'mother' rather than on the 'father'.<sup>18</sup> Again, however, the ancient areas covered by modern Libya are more towards the east, essentially Cyrenaica and Tripolitania.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> The lands of Saba/Sheba (in Yemen), Cush, Nubia and Abyssinia/Axum are here grouped together as ancient Aethiopia (following Williams and Finch 1984: 12).

<sup>16</sup> Even the argument by Williams and Finch would benefit from more liberal use of a large body of evidence available. Occasional regency by Egyptian queens is not a particularly convincing argument for matriarchal roots. Evidence of matrilinearity, where descent and inheritance follow the female line, is not conclusive proof for female dominance or matriarchy, although the two are often found together. According to modern theory, matrilinearity is an early form of social organisation in hunter-gatherer societies based on co-operation rather than subordination, and is supplanted by patriarchy when wealth is accumulated and property differentials grow (Loth 1987: 28). On the origins of patriarchal societies see also LERNER (1986): *The creation of patriarchy*, 15-35. A matriarchal phase in society was first suggested in BACHOFEN'S work of 1861, *Das Mutterrecht*, whose theories have been adjusted by a number of scholars subsequently, for example the 1884 work by ENGELS: *The origin of the family, private property and the state*. DIOP (1959): *L'unité culturelle de l'Afrique noire - domaines du patriarcat et du matriarcat dans l'Antiquité classique*, 107, in particular sees Africa as the 'berceau du matriarcat par excellence' which was only supplanted by patriarchy under Arab influence, although this author cannot be rated as an objective scholar and has a definite agenda to promote African culture above those of Greece and Rome (see note 19 below).

<sup>17</sup> The Candaces (from the Meroitic 'Kantake' or *Kavδάκη*, meaning Queen-Mother) ruled as Queens between 300 BC and AD 300 (Hendrickx 1984: 34).

<sup>18</sup> Matrilinear succession is also known to have been practised among the Imushagh currently living in the eastern part of Libya, who show traces of the matriarchal principle of *partus sequitur ventrem* in their laws of succession (Law 1978: 146).

<sup>19</sup> In a very readable but unfortunately largely anecdotal and unsubstantiated work, DIOP (1959): *L'unité culturelle de l'Afrique noire - domaines du patriarcat et du matriarcat dans l'Antiquité classique*, discusses the evidence for matriarchy in modern African societies which purportedly had their roots in Africa's ancient past. This work cannot, however, be taken as a serious piece of scholarship.



African emphasis on succession through the female line is manifested in Egypt<sup>20</sup> and Aethiopia. The importance of legitimate succession can be seen in the prominent role of the Queen Mother in these civilizations. At Axum she was second only to the King in political importance, since it was through her that the king derived his claim to the throne. According to legend in the *Kebra Negast*, Axum could originally be ruled only by a woman who had not had relations with men, and the title of the Aethiopian queen was *negeshta nagashtat*, 'queen of queens' (Kobishchanov 1979: 199). This custom was apparently changed by Queen Makeda, who placed her son on the throne and ruled that henceforth only men and not women would reign. Kobishchanov (1979: 199) interprets this legend to mean that Aethiopian queens ruled together with their sons and brothers, since this is also the view presented by Tyrranius Rufinus [*Hist. Eccles.* 10.9-10].<sup>21</sup> The Queen often possessed extensive estates, had her own court and 'her voice carried much weight in the king's council' (Loth 1987: 36) - presumably this would be in cases where the king was still young enough to be influenced (Kobishchanov 1979: 199).

It was customary for the Aethiopian pharaohs of Egypt (the 25th dynasty) to appoint their female relatives as high priestesses of Amon at Thebes and at Napata, where they formed their own line of succession from aunt to niece (Williams and Finch 1984: 23). In common with many other cultures African women play a prominent role in religion, and those who practised divination among the Libyan tribes were more commonly female than male (Bates 1970: 178). This is then one aspect which also applies to the western provinces under discussion: even as late as the 6<sup>th</sup> century Procopius still refers to a practice among the Mauri where it is the women who foretell the future [*De Bell. Vand.* 2.8].

From the western regions of North Africa no names of historically prominent women or queens have been preserved from before the Roman period, and in view of the lack of evidence no real argument can be made for matriarchal roots. For the less prominent women of these pre-literate cultures of Africa information is virtually non-existent. We have a number of chance observations by travellers such as Herodotus or Strabo who tend to note (or misinterpret) evidence on cultural anomalies and bring their own Graeco-Roman biases to the topic. This is hardly sophisticated enough to bear comparison with the information provided on Roman traditions. Fortunately we can rely to some extent on information derived from observations of Berber tribes in later times. Thus Bates (1970: 113): 'The daily life of the female members of any ancient North African community must, however, have been much what it is at the present time. The women must have prepared and cooked the food, milked the flocks, and, among the more advanced tribes, done the weaving ...'. This must have remained very much the case during the entire period of Roman occupation.<sup>22</sup> From this we can clearly deduce something about the traditional African attitude in assigning male and female roles: women were engaged in nurturing and domestic tasks such as the bearing and raising children and flock-tending and weaving, where men engaged in warfare and other 'public' activities such as trade. Whatever its roots in prehistory, African society was clearly patriarchal by the time the Romans arrived. The man stood at the head of the family and women were subordinate to him, so much so that Diehl (1944.1: 310) concludes that during the 6<sup>th</sup> century 'dans la société

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<sup>20</sup> This prominence given to women might also explain why Egypt during the period of Hellenistic and Roman control shows such a large amount of evidence on women of means and influence when compared to other provinces. Of course the fact that 'more papyri have been preserved in the sands of Egypt than anywhere else in the ancient world' (Pomeroy 1984: xi-xii) gives the ancient historian access to a volume of evidence which is not possible elsewhere in the Roman world.

<sup>21</sup> The king could rule with a woman - mother or sister - but not with a wife (Kobishchanov 1979: 98).

<sup>22</sup> Procopius also describes a women of the Mauri baking bread and looking after two children [*De Bello Vand.* 4.7.3].



berbère ... la femme, sauf quelques exceptions n'est guère autre chose qu'une servante'. According to modern African sources and interviews conducted by Loth, many African tribes practised polygamy and women were 'an additional manpower in the fields of a polygamist' (Joseph Ki-Zerbo quoted by Loth 1987: 8). Even as late as the late 4<sup>th</sup> century we read that 'Nubel, as a petty king, had great power among the Moorish peoples. On departing from life, besides legitimate sons he left some that were the offspring of concubines' [Amm. Mar. 29.5.2].<sup>23</sup> Wives may have had a hierarchy of sorts, since Sallust [*Bell. Jug.* 11.3] reports that Jugurtha was looked down upon because his mother was not the equal of that of Hiempsal, and such hierarchy is also usually the case in polygamous cultures. It was this polygamous practice which possibly led some earlier Classical authors to describe the Africans as 'promiscuous'.<sup>24</sup> Pliny [*NH* 5.8.45] for example mentions that the Garamantes did not marry but lived in a promiscuous fashion with women (*Garamantes matrimoniorum exortes passim cum feminis degunt*), but this occurs in a passage which also includes information on cave-dwellers with no voices, headless tribes and other similar stories which were told him, so the information may be suspect in any case.<sup>25</sup>

African women were therefore socially clearly relegated to the female domestic role which is found also among the Greeks and Romans, and it is unlikely that they were invested with any legal rights. But in some respects African women were better off than their Classical counterparts. The African tribes seem to have placed great emphasis on women's magical and/or religious powers (Salama 1981: 521), and this would presumably have carried more weight in unsophisticated societies. Loth (1987: 96-97) claims that the status of women was also enhanced by another custom which contrasted with the Roman custom of the dowry accompanying the bride. The African tradition followed the custom of *lobola* or payment for the bride by the prospective husband to her father. Clark (1993: 16) quite rightly points out, however, that bride-price, which ostensibly acknowledged a woman's value, also left her entirely in the power of her new husband, whereas the dowry system gave a wife status and security *vis à vis* her husband, since it did not become his absolutely. Among some tribes, the Classical authors tell us, women could choose their own husbands, and had a degree of sexual freedom virtually unknown elsewhere in the ancient world (which is of course why it is so frequently commented upon by Greek and Roman authors). Herodotus, for example, relates of the Gindanes tribe that women wore leather anklets which they collected from their lovers, and she who wore the greatest number gained prestige since she was sought by the greatest number of men [4.176]. Although we must take this Graeco-Roman evidence with a pinch of salt, it is quite possible that African tribal women may have had a degree of sexual freedom unknown to Roman society - even today Imushagh girls can take lovers without shame and can decide on their own husband.

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<sup>23</sup> A son of Masinissa also fathered Jugurtha by a concubine [Sall., *Bell. Jug.* 5.7]. Polygamy was practised up to the 15<sup>th</sup> century in East Africa among the Ethiopian Christians (Kobishchanov 1979: 144).

<sup>24</sup> The same indication of sexual promiscuity among some of the African tribes appears in the 10<sup>th</sup> century work of al-Hamdānī, who claims that the Numidians and Gaetuli were 'preoccupied in sexual intercourse with women', that the women co-habited with men before marriage and that the men shared their womenfolk sexually. He does not, however, ascribe such sexual activities to the people of the Fezzān or to the Nubians and Abyssinians in the South-East (text quoted by Norris 1982: 6-7). ILEVARE (1973): 'Family and women in North Africa from the fifth to the first century BC', 24; 41n.8, believes that polygamous customs fell away under Punic influence, but the argument, based on 5 inscriptions (*CIL* 8.15666-7 and 15721-2 and 20216) is not very convincing given the limited influence of Punic civilization in general (see for example BROUGHTON (1968<sup>2</sup>): *The Romanization of Africa Proconsularis*, 9).

<sup>25</sup> The Garamantes lived on the edge of the desert. The Graeco-Roman writers on Africa did not visit such inaccessible regions themselves and relied on second-hand information. In addition to this the vast mysteriousness of the *terra incognita*, the Sahara desert (which remained nameless till the Arab conquest) inevitably gave rise to fabulous and fantastic tales. In his commentary on Agatharchides of Cnidus (1989), BURNSTEIN comments that some of the so-called 'tribes' recorded by ancient writers could possibly have been apes!



Bates (1970: 37) tentatively suggests that this type of information may be further evidence for early matriarchy at least among Libyan tribes, but this would seem a point difficult to prove. This casual attitude to virginity is certainly something which predates Islamic influence and codes for female behaviour. It would appear that for Africans 'moral' behaviour for a woman was only activated upon marriage, when questions of paternity and inheritance were involved (Bates 1970: 36). But we also hear of African girls who were bought in marriage at the age of seven or eight, or who could be buried alive if their father so wished (Olson 1994: 25). Clearly what we perceive to be greater sexual freedom was not total autonomy. Other Graeco-Roman assessments of sexual mores can be found for example in the view of the Adyrmachidae, where affianced husbands ostensibly brought their prospective brides to their king, who slept with those he found to his liking, a kind of *droit de cuissage*,<sup>26</sup> while among the Augilae, brides apparently followed custom in prostituting themselves on their wedding night for payment [Pomp. Mela 1.8]. Nicolaus Damascenus relates that the Dapsolibues mated indiscriminately in darkness as part of a fertility rite after the Pleiades had set [FHG 135]. And if, as the various examples of 'sexual freedom' for women seem to suggest, virginity was not highly prized among the Libyan tribes, the following anecdote told by Herodotus indicates that either there were vast differences among tribes in this regard, or alternatively the explanation may be that the anecdote shows cultural transmission from Greece to Africa.<sup>27</sup> Herodotus relates that among the Auseans a mock fight was held between virgin girls armed with stones and clubs in honour of 'Athena'; if one of them were injured it was held as proof that she had been not true virgin [4.180].<sup>28</sup>

## THE EVIDENCE OF PUNIC CULTURE

Gender roles in Punic culture are even more difficult to determine since nothing of their own literature remains, and our sources (Diodorus Siculus, Appian, Polybius, Livy, Justin) are predominantly interested in military contact between Carthage and Rome, and had their own literary motives or cultural biases. Aspects which have been verified by archaeology indicate that in their private lives the Romans and the Phoenician descendants shared some common elements. In the first place monogamy was more commonly the practice in Punic culture. Their tombs contain skeletons of married couples (Charles-Picard 1959:153) and tombstones depict some joint domestic scenes, which also indicate that their family lives were patriarchally structured (Charles-Picard 1959: 279).

Traditionally Phoenician women of the privileged class appear to have enjoyed a great deal of freedom and even a measure of equality, particularly when compared with other communities of the Near East (<http://phoenicia.org/dress.html>). But despite the once-upon-a-time prominence of their famous queen, Dido, there is no evidence that Punic women played any direct role in matters of war, trade and politics.<sup>29</sup> Although

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<sup>26</sup> Anthropologists relate this to other cultures where the responsibility of defloration is regarded as *sacra* and undertaken by parents (Bataks and Pelew islanders), the matrons (Bisayas of the Philippines) or priests (Cambodia) (cited in Bates 1970: 111 n.4).

<sup>27</sup> According to DESANGES (1962): *Catalogue des tribus africaines*, 81 and map 4, the Auseans occupied the area between the Triton lake and the coast, south of Carthage. The nearest Greek colony, Neapolis, is some distance away, but the Ausean proximity to the coast may have made cultural contacts possible.

<sup>28</sup> There are suggestions that this may be a fertility rite of some sort (Decret and Fantar 1981: 250).

<sup>29</sup> Dido (the name is Greek, where the original name, Elyssa, is Phoenician) was the legendary Queen of Carthage, who in Virgil's epic becomes the lover of the hero Aeneas and eventually commits suicide. In the legend as it is told by Timaeus, however, Dido was the intrepid queen who ventured out from her native Tyre and founded the city of Carthage, probably during the 8<sup>th</sup> century BC. The possible



Charles-Picard *et al* (1961: 153) claim that women exerted influence, this inference (which is unsubstantiated by references to the sources) is possibly based solely on the role of Sophonisba discussed below, a rather debatable piece of evidence. Punic women from prominent families did play a public role in religion as priestesses who had authority over all the temple personnel, male and female, since this is corroborated by inscriptional evidence (Charles-Picard *et al* 1961: 155).<sup>30</sup>

The only woman of Punic culture about whom we have some details is Sophonisba, the daughter of Hasdrubal Gisgonis, who had apparently been held up as a prize in marriage by her father in his attempts to forge political alliances with the Numidian chieftains Masinissa and Syphax<sup>31</sup> [Dio 9.11.1; App., *Pun.* 27-28; Diod. Sic. 27.7]. She was married to Syphax, and according to Polybius and Livy [Polyb. 14.1.4; 14.7.6; Liv. 29.23] it was because of Sophonisba that Syphax was persuaded to take up the Carthaginian cause. But when Syphax was defeated by Masinissa and Scipio's lieutenant, Laelius, both she and her husband were taken prisoner, and Syphax was taken to Rome. According to the sources, Masinissa fell violently in love with Sophonisba [Livy 30.12.11-15.11; App., *Pun.* 27-28; Dio 9.11; Polyb. 14.4 *passim*], and when Scipio wanted Sophonisba as part of the spoils of war, Masinissa helped her to commit suicide by sending her a cup of poison (203 BC), to avoid the shame of being led in the triumph.<sup>32</sup> The narrative surrounding Sophonisba is, however, much romanticized and difficult to use as a reflection of social reality for Sophonisba herself, and certainly as a generalization of other Punic women of her class. It appears that as a woman of the Carthaginian aristocracy she was well-educated in the arts and music (καὶ παιδείᾳ πολλῇ καὶ γραμμάτων καὶ μουσικῆς ἥσκητο) [Dio 17.57], which were probably much influenced by Hellenic standards. It is impossible to know, of course, whether we can take this literally to mean that women of a certain level in Punic society were privileged in this way, or whether this is something which Dio thought to use to enhance Sophonisba's allure - there is no reference to it in any other extant source. He certainly follows the mention of her education with a reference to her being clever and charming and hence irresistible, and we are reminded of Ovid's description of education as enhancing a woman's allure [*Ars Amat.* 3].

## VANDAL AND BYZANTINE TRADITIONS

All the evidence we have about the Vandals in Africa shows a culture rather different from that of the Romans, although contemporary Romans already bore traces of many foreign influences, and the Vandals themselves had been in contact with the Romans for several centuries. Even in appearance the Vandals differed physically from the Romans and the Africans. The Vandals were εὐμήκεις τε ἄγαν καὶ καλοὶ τὰ σώματα ('very tall and fair of body') [Procop., *De Bell. Vand.* 4.9.11], something that most ancient writers found remarkable about the Germanic tribes. Unfortunately very little iconography remains to tell us anything more about the appearance of Vandal men, and nothing at all about Vandal women - which in itself says something about gender attitudes

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and varied interpretations of this legend are summarised by SOREN *ET AL* (1990): *Carthage: Uncovering the mysteries and splendors of ancient Tunisia*, 17-29.

<sup>30</sup> The role of women in African and Punic priesthoods is discussed at more length in Chapter 12, pp. 271-273.

<sup>31</sup> Syphax was king of the Masaesyli in the west of Numidia, while Masinissa's father, Gala, had been king of the Massyli in the east of the territory.

<sup>32</sup> On plausibility of the tale and some political details, see DOREY (1961): 'Masinissa, Syphax and Sophoniba'. On Sophonisba's suicide as related by Dio, see MOSCOVICH (1997): 'Cassius Dio on the death of Sophonisba'.



in their culture. The Vandals were of Germanic warrior stock and while some prominent women - wives and sisters of the Vandal kings - are named, one can only conclude from the general lack of information that women had very little say in anything.

Unlike the Franks, the Goths or the Lombards, no chronicler recorded the history of the Vandals, and for their traditions of private life we are largely reliant on general comments about Germanic traditions. Both Caesar and Tacitus [*De Bello Gallico* and *Germaniae* respectively] paint a rather idealized picture of the Germanic tribes. They both refer to the high Germanic regard for chastity [*De Bello Gall.* 6.21; *Germ.* 18], and Salvian also calls the Goths untrustworthy but chaste [*De Gub. Dei* 7.6]. No prostitution is known before the migration southward, and women do not appear to have played any role in entertainment (Todd 1972: 80-81). The *Germania* [19] indicates clearly that adultery was an offence only for women, who were stripped and had their hair shorn off by their husbands, who then drove them from the house and flogged them through the whole village or killed them by throwing them in a nearby bog. Men could only marry once they had proved their valour, while women are thought to have married at a later age than was customary in Rome, probably in their early twenties (Todd 1972: 30). Tacitus mentions that marriage between the noble families of different Germanic tribes was not uncommon [*Germ.* 7.4]. Polygamy is mentioned by several Roman writers [Caes., *De Bello Gall.*, 1.53.4; Strabo 7.1.4; Tac., *Ann.* 11.16.2 and 17.2], but it appears that this was mainly for the élite warrior-class. Marriage was not a legal arrangement but a social arrangement for the procreation of children and the division of labour (Wemple 1985: 13). Division of labour was determined by sex rather than by class: men were warriors, while women worked the fields and kept house [*Germ.* 8]. There were no domestic slaves (or wet-nurses) [*Germ.* 20], although Finley (1960: 191-203) may be correct in assuming that slaves assisted women in the fields. Since the bride normally went to the home of her husband, the depletion of the work force in her natal home was usually compensated by the *Kaufehe* or bridal gift of oxen or horses [*Germ.* 18], similar to the custom of *lobola* among the Africans. In the Germanic tradition wives were chattels who did not even sit at the table while the men ate (Amstadt 1994: 106-107). Tacitus [*Germ.* 30.3] notes that sometimes the women would accompany soldiers on campaigns to serve them food and tend their wounds. But women from some Germanic tribes were themselves also known to take part in warfare, as related for example by Ammianus Marcellinus [15.12].<sup>33</sup>

Tacitus is at variance with archaeological information in believing that women wore trousers and left the upper body bare. Only dresses have been recovered for women, usually woollen skirts of varying lengths or dresses similar to the Greek *peplos* (Todd 1972: 88). The column of Marcus Aurelius depicts many Germanic women wearing this type of dress. Brooches were the most distinctive jewellery worn by the Germanic women, but finger rings, bracelets and earrings, are also sometimes recovered from grave finds.

It is only in divination and witchcraft that women seem to have played any dominant role, even advising in battle as in the case of Veleda to the rebellious Roman senator Civilis in AD 69. According to Tacitus the Germans believed that this power was contained in all women, and they took their advice seriously [*Germ.* 8]. Among the Franks it was apparently Clothilde, the wife of King Clovis, who persisted in her efforts to convert her husband to Christianity and through whose efforts the Franks were the first of the German peoples to adopt

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<sup>33</sup> Germanic women warriors are discussed by AMSTADT (1994): *Die Frau bei der Germanen*, 83-85.



Christianity, although the observations of Gregory of Tours show that during the 6<sup>th</sup> century many of their practices were still very pagan (Wemple 1987: 135).

### **Traditions of private life from Byzantium**

A great deal can be said on the private world of Byzantium, although there is more information on the later period than on the centuries under discussion here.<sup>34</sup> There is virtually no information about women during the Byzantine period in Africa, and the source material is chiefly devoted to Church controversies with Constantinople as touched upon in Chapter 2. Again we may infer from the general silence about women during the Byzantine period in Africa that they did not play a very prominent role, although there are one or two exceptions which will be discussed later. Since there is so little evidence for women in Byzantine Africa it serves little purpose to go into too much detail here, and only a few aspects will be highlighted.

Social *mores* at Constantinople were heavily influenced by Christian ideals but within a militaristic and hierarchical reality (Herrin 1983: 171), and for most women the options remained life in a convent or marriage. While second and even third marriages might be tolerated, anything beyond this was absolutely forbidden. Byzantine women of the privileged status groups<sup>35</sup> ideally would have led lives that were segregated from the outside world, particularly when they were growing up, again linked to the concept of male honour. Virginity was still highly prized in the prospective new bride and seen as the 'essence of virtue'. Charanis (1973b: 62) mentions the custom whereby the morning after the wedding night the proof of the bride's virginity was exhibited to relatives and friends. Even the fashions for women dictated that they be soberly veiled from unfamiliar male eyes (Brown 1987: 245). Patlagean (1987: 572-574) relates a number of anecdotes from later Byzantine history (10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> centuries), which indicate that segregation was an ideal often transgressed, something which is probably also true for the earlier Byzantine period. Women travelled, albeit with entourage, and sometimes even dined with men in the company of their husband. In the 6<sup>th</sup> century the empress Theodora's youthful career in the theatre made her the antithesis of what the Byzantine matron ideally represented – modesty, piety and sobriety. The wife of Belisarius, Antonina, also did not conform strictly to the 'ideal' wife of chaste fidelity, although both these portrayals may be exaggerated for the purpose of discrediting the men they were associated with and follow a well established rhetorical tradition on 'wicked women'.

These were the disparate and yet not entirely dissimilar influences which were exercised on women's roles in the Romanized African context. There are clear parallels between Roman and Punic traditions (although we know little about Punic women) and a few similarities between the African and the Vandal position of women. It remains now to examine what effect these traditions had, and in what proportion.

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<sup>34</sup> On private life in Byzantium and especially on women, see the section 'Women' in the *ODB*, 2201-2204 with references. Also DIEHL (1963): *Byzantine empresses* and (1972): *Theodora*; CHARANIS (1973b): 'Daily life in Byzantium', for a general but rather anecdotal overview; HERRIN (1983): 'In search of Byzantine women', (1992): 'Council in Trullo on women' and (1999): *Byzantine empresses. Women and power in Byzantium, AD 527-1204*; KARLIN-HAYTER (1992): 'Byzantine marriage'; VIKAN (1990): 'Art and marriage in early Byzantium'; some interesting general trends but rather later than the period under discussion, PATLAGEAN (1987): 'Byzantium in the tenth and eleventh centuries'; GARLAND (1988): 'Life and ideology of Byzantine women'; LAIOU, A. (1981): 'The role of women in Byzantine society' and (1982): 'Addendum to the role of women in Byzantine society'. Some further references are included in the rest of the thesis where relevant.

<sup>35</sup> We have a good deal of information about aristocratic women's private lives, but little about the habits of ordinary married couples.



## CHAPTER 4

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# WOMEN'S CHILDHOOD AND EDUCATION IN ROMAN AFRICA

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The focus of this chapter is on a variety of aspects relating firstly to general attitudes towards female children and secondly towards women's education from childhood to adulthood, both of which are controversial in modern scholarship on Roman society. Women in the Roman world were more often than not disadvantaged in both these aspects in comparison to men. My view here is that in the African provinces that women of the higher status groups at least were less disadvantaged than may appear at first glance.<sup>1</sup> At the same time it must be admitted that our body of evidence is of course much smaller than for Roman Italy or even for Rome itself, and it would be unwise to generalize too freely from such a small sample.

### INFANCY AND EARLY CHILDHOOD

#### **Definition of the stages from childhood to womanhood - *infans*, *puella*, *mulier*:**

Latin terms differentiating between the stages of infancy, childhood, adolescence and adulthood are rather vague.<sup>2</sup> *Infans*, literally 'not speaking', is most often used to denote babies, while *puella* can describe any girl between infancy and marriage. In general Roman authors refer to childhood as the innocent and uneducated state, although references are few and far between and usually taken by modern scholars as an indication of the lack of interest in this stage of life in antiquity (Dixon 1992a: 100-101). In the Roman tradition the valuation of children of either sex increased with their age, something which is clearly confirmed by Shaw's wide-ranging count of Roman epitaphs from the provinces (1991a) on the basis that valuation in death, i.e. by a tombstone, was an indication of how that person had been socially valued in life. Roman Africa in particular of all the

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<sup>1</sup> Education was the privilege of the élite, and men in lower status groups also had limited access to education. See HARRIS (1989): *Ancient literacy*.

<sup>2</sup> The terminology for the various stages used in Roman law, which is more specific, is discussed by DIXON (1992a): *The Roman family*, 104-108.



provinces showed the lowest rate in commemorating young children, particularly in the smaller towns and the rural areas, while the situation is slightly improved in big centres like Carthage and Cirta and by the influence of Christianity. Shaw (1991a: 73-80) ascribes this state of affairs in Roman Africa to indigenous influences, where great value was attached to age and the Elders of the community, as opposed to the young. This appears to have strengthened the Roman attitudes to commemoration. Roman literature, where we are of course dealing with the élite, presents us with a few ideals regarding older children, for example that the state of innocence for both boys and girls was protected by a sign of sexual inviolability in the wearing of the *toga praetexta*, by which they were signified as sacrosanct (Sebesta 1998: 108-9). The transition to adulthood for a man was accomplished by the assumption of the *toga virilis*, while for the woman it was becoming a wife and assuming the *stola* (Wiedemann 1989: 145). The age at which Roman girls in Africa were married will be discussed in more detail at the beginning of Chapter 6, but was legally permitted from the age of twelve. Regardless of age, from her marriage a young woman formally left her girlhood behind her.

### Birth and child exposure

There does not appear to be any doubt that girls in antiquity were considered less valuable than boys from a functional point of view.<sup>3</sup> In Graeco-Roman civilization this is already demonstrated by indications that girl children were subjected to exposure more often than boys,<sup>4</sup> and up to and during the Byzantine era various sexual practices and drugs were used in attempts to give birth to boys (Charanis 1973b: 63). The implications of providing dowries for a large number of daughters is the most obvious reason for a higher percentage of female exposures and a preference for male heirs, since Roman fathers essentially wanted their wealth to remain within the family.<sup>5</sup> Another possible indication that girl children were exposed more often than boys is the ancients' fear of incest, often expressed by Christian authors,<sup>6</sup> which must have been more likely in the case of surviving girls having sexual relationships with older men than in Oedipus-equivalents of surviving boys having relations women fifteen or more years older than themselves.<sup>7</sup> In the Roman African context the practice of child exposure is mentioned by several writers, for example in the *Octavius* of Minucius Felix [30.3], who mentions it in the same breath as abortion and child sacrifice.<sup>8</sup> He specifically mentions the exposure and

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<sup>3</sup> See for example Polybius' reference [31.28.2] to Aemilius Paullus as 'childless' after the deaths of his youngest sons, even though he still had two daughters who may not yet have been married at that time, as well as two other sons who had been adopted into other families. Statistics for Rome reveal that daughters are not as well represented as sons in epitaphs (Dixon 1988: 201). Dixon concludes that the death of a daughter signified only a loss of companionship, and was therefore of one-dimensional value (1988: 212).

<sup>4</sup> On this point see EYBEN (1980/81): 'Family planning in antiquity', 16-17; HARRIS (1982): 'Theoretical possibility of infanticide', *contra* ENGELS (1980): 'The problem of female infanticide in the Greco-Roman world'. FRENCH (1988): 'Birth control, childbirth and early childhood' reports general estimates of exposure in Graeco-Roman antiquity with an approximation of a 10 to 20% increase in the case of girls. Despite the fact that she argues (not very convincingly) against the practice, the most complete list of ancient sources and modern bibliography is given by SCOTT (2001): 'Unpicking a myth'.

<sup>5</sup> Inheritance by women if they remained under the *potestas* of their father could also be an issue, since women eventually were able to leave their property to their own children, and it would therefore pass out of the male family line. During the Christian period this problem could also be solved by dedicating surplus daughters and also sons to the service of God. A further reason could be the reliance on sons for provision in old age.

<sup>6</sup> Justin Martyr, *Apolog.* 1.27, Clemens Alexandrinus, *Paed.*, Tertullian, *Ad Nat.* 1.16.1 *passim*.

<sup>7</sup> But see Chapter 8 on perceptions of women and age in Roman Africa. Tertullian specifically comments on the scandal that exposed infants end up in brothels to be visited by their own fathers [*Ad Nat.* 16].

<sup>8</sup> Also by Tertullian [*Ad Nat.* 1.16]: Pagans abandon their children to the kindness of strangers or to adoption by better parents; Augustine [*Ep.* 98.23; *De Nupt. et Concup.* 1.15.17].



sacrifice of sons (*filios*), presumably because by mentioning the more valued members of society he can make this 'pagan' custom sound as negative as possible - he is replying to the accusation that Christians slew and rent asunder infants. There is no reason, however, to assume that child exposure was practised on a large scale - since the likelihood of children surviving their infancy was not as high as in modern times, this would have kept numbers low.<sup>9</sup> Olson (1994: 21) sees the ratio of men to women in Africa during the second century AD (estimated at 140:100) as a result of the tendency to expose girl children more often than boys.<sup>10</sup> But while this is a speculative basis for an argument, we very seldom hear of families in Africa where the number of daughters outnumbered the number of sons, except in cases where there were only daughters.<sup>11</sup> Indeed, as in two epigraphical testimonies of particularly large families from Tazembout [*AE* 1989, 896 and 897], sons outnumbered daughters by far.<sup>12</sup>

The custom of child sacrifice in Africa rather ironically appears to support the value given to male children over female children. Our evidence for its practice during Roman times comes from Tertullian [*Apologet.* 9.2-4], although he gives no indication to what particular level or proportion of the population this applied, or whether, as in child exposure, girls were more likely victims than boys.<sup>13</sup> There are some indications of a preference for boys from pre-Roman Punic practices observed by Graeco-Roman writers and from earlier texts. The Carthaginians had continued the tradition of their Semitic origins (similar traditions existed among the Phoenicians and the Jews).<sup>14</sup> Their Punic descendants practised child sacrifice on a regular annual basis (Stager 1980:3) but particularly in times of great crisis when special favours were demanded of the gods.<sup>15</sup> Some literary evidence<sup>16</sup> suggests the 'first born' children from the leading families, which probably meant sons since the terms imply that it must be a child of value. The optimum value of the sacrificial victim was that he should be young, male and élite or at least free born.<sup>17</sup> Other Biblical references to the Hebrew tradition of child sacrifice mention that 'sons and daughters' passed through the sacrificial fire [*Jeremiah* 32.35; *2 Kings* 23.10; *2 Chronicles* 28.3; 33.6; *Deuteronomy* 12.31], but this reference is obviously open to interpretation. The osteological remains at the tophet or sanctuary near Carthage can tell us nothing of the sex of the children

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<sup>9</sup> Other references from Roman writers accept child exposure as a fact of life: Tac., *Germ.* 19; Aul. Gell., *NA* 12.1.23; Suet., *De Gramm.* 7.21. This aspect is discussed more fully in Chapters 6 and 7 under the ideal of fertility and under motherhood respectively. On the loss of children in infancy in an African context, see LASSÈRE (1977): *Ubique populus*, 492-506.

<sup>10</sup> LASSÈRE (1977): *Ubique populus*, 506-510, has calculated that for every 100 women during the reign of the Antonines, there were: 188 men in Carthage, 166 men in Madauros, etcetera, but notes that while this may be due to female infant exposure, public testimony for men (monuments commemorating careers as well as deaths) was just more plentiful than for women.

<sup>11</sup> See for example *ILAlg* I, 2145: seven daughters are numbered as the heirs of M. Cornelius Fronto. No sons are mentioned. See Appendix A nr. 49.

<sup>12</sup> The text is quoted on full on p. 104.

<sup>13</sup> The offering of young children in the Roman African context is also discussed under motherhood, pp. 158-159.

<sup>14</sup> Child sacrifice to Moloch or Baal is mentioned in *Jeremiah* 32.35 and *Leviticus* 18.21; 20.2-5; the story of Abraham's sacrifice of his first-born son Isaac, *Genesis* 22. See also BROWN (1991): *Late Carthaginian child sacrifice*, 21-37 for further Biblical and Phoenician references.

<sup>15</sup> For example when between 252 and 254 a plague ravaged the population and the Carthaginians sacrificed children to appease the gods [*Orosius, Hist. adv. Pag.* 4.6.3-5].

<sup>16</sup> *Genesis* 22; *Exodus* 13.12-13; 22.30; 34.20 - the first-born sons of all Jews are said to belong to Yahweh and must be redeemed (Boswell 1988: 141).

<sup>17</sup> WARMINGTON (1981): 'The Carthaginian period', 454: 'the sacrifices were always of males'; also BROWN (1991): *Late Carthaginian child sacrifice*, 26-27.



(Stager 1980: 4). The tophet also included the remains of young sheep and goats which could apparently be substituted under certain conditions for children - these animals, as far as could be determined, were all male (Stager 1980: 4-5).<sup>18</sup> Plutarch [*Mor.* 2.493] describes how Carthaginian parents offered their own children, and those who had none would buy children from the poor, or use slave children - surely in ancient mentality not the equivalent in value of the 'first-born'.<sup>19</sup> Thus the issue remains in some doubt simply because we do not have enough evidence. But presumably, even if child sacrifice favouring boys had been carried out in Africa during the Roman period, this would not have been to the extent that it affected the local demographics. Child exposure and infanticide of girl children does not appear to have been part of the native African culture, although information is scarce and the argument is based chiefly on the fact that many North African tribes practised polygyny, implying a surplus of women. Native traditions do not, however, appear to have influenced the Roman practice of getting rid of unwanted children during the period under discussion. Christian authors are opposed to the practice (Minucius Felix, for example), but do not consider the relative worth of male and female children, and their underlying reasons for objecting to the practice are usually set in the context of pagan criticisms of perceived Christian customs.

But too great a focus on the practices of child exposure and child sacrifice may give a misleading impression of other realities of relationships in Roman African society. Referring to the Roman tradition, Dixon (1988: 201) reminds us of the Freudian argument that conscious or unconscious sexual rivalry makes a mother more indulgent of a son, while a father would be more lenient towards a daughter.<sup>20</sup> A father's special relationship with a daughter is occasionally mentioned, for example in the case of the doctor Dioscurus related by Augustine (*Filia eius, in qua unica adquiescebat, ....*His daughter, an only child, the pride of his life, was ill ....) [*Ep.* 227.1]. The relationship from the father's side seems to have been essentially protective, although Tertullian [*De Spect.* 21] objects to the ambiguities of pagan society where a father will 'guard the ears of his maiden daughter from every smutty word' but still takes her to the theatre where she is confronted by worse language and even gestures (*ut et qui filiae virginis ab omni spurco verbo aures tuetur, ipse eam in theatrum ad illas voces gesticulationesque deducat*). Hallett concludes that father and daughter relationships are particularly strong in the Roman tradition, stronger than the connection between husbands and wives (1984: 223-243; 343-346).<sup>21</sup> Given the fact that guardianship over a young woman tended to remain with her father even in the event of her marriage during the period under discussion, continued contact between father and daughter could have been a likely result, but on this count we do not have a great deal of evidence from the Roman African context. The most detailed account of the relationship between father and daughter here is reflected in *Passio* of Perpetua and Felicitas. Perpetua mentions her father's words that she was the favourite among all his children, and describes his grief at her arrest. Her father himself reminds her of the special tie between a father and daughter.

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<sup>18</sup> By the 4<sup>th</sup> century the human victims outnumbered the animal victims nine to one (Stager 1980: 7).

<sup>19</sup> Diodorus tells us that the gods were so angered by this change that they delivered Carthage into the hands of her enemies [20.14]. See also Justinus 18.6; Lactantius, *Div. Instit.* 1.21.

<sup>20</sup> See also Plutarch, *Coniug. Praec.* 36, according to whom fathers are fond of daughters because the latter need them, while mothers are fond of sons because they need their help. HALLETT (1984): *Fathers and daughters in Roman society*, 246, assumes these remarks have reference to a Roman context, while DIXON (1988): *The Roman mother*, 201 n.90, seems to think that the situation described is essentially Greek, although she cites some Roman equivalent examples (Cicero, *Pro Murena* 23 and *In Verrem* 2.1.112).

<sup>21</sup> HALLETT (1984): *Fathers and daughters in Roman society* is suggestive for imperial and élite family values.



*Miserere, filia, canis meis; miserere patri, si dignus sum a te pater vocari; si his te manibus ad hunc florem aetatis provexi, si te praeposui omnibus fratribus tuis...*

'Daughter', he said, 'have pity on my grey head, have pity on me your father, if I deserve to be called your father, if I have favoured you above all your brothers, if I have raised you to reach this prime of your life...'

[*Passio P & F* 5.2]

The closeness of the father-daughter tie is also emphasized in Augustine's interpretation of their martyrdom in an attempt to explain the anomalous situation that Perpetua's husband is never mentioned in the *Passio* beyond the fact that she is 'respectably married' [*Serm.*, 281]. In Augustine's interpretation the devil, knowing the strength of the bond between a father and his daughter, sends her father to tempt her to give up her cause.<sup>22</sup> When Perpetua's father throws himself at her feet, entreating her to recant, Salisbury (1997: 111) points out the ironic reversal of the procedure at the birth of a child, in which the newborn infant is placed at the feet of the father 'in a token of the father's power of life and death over the child'. This power has now clearly been overtly broken. Most African Romans would have found Perpetua's rejection of her father's authority a rejection of Roman values (Salisbury 1997: 89). This is of course the emphasis of many of the stories of martyrdom, following the Christian ideal of abandoning ties of family and possessions in favour of those of faith [*Matthew* 12.46-50; *Mark* 3.31-35; *Luke* 5.11].<sup>23</sup> Nevertheless Augustine later feels compelled to explain the rejection of the father's authority by emphasizing Perpetua's compassion for her father, by which she did not 'transgress the commandment that honour be paid to parents' [*Serm.*, 281.2].<sup>24</sup>

Despite the fact that there was a high death rate among young children, parents lamented the premature death of their offspring and relationships between fathers and daughters are attested on many tombstones. The affectionate commemoration of daughters often appears to be an expression of genuine feeling, compared to the more stereotypical wording used for wives. It is possible that commemorators saw less reflected glory to be had from mourning a lost daughter than from a wife of sterling qualities reflecting positively on their husbands. Two general points made by Garnsey (1991: 50-51) for the loss of children in Roman Antiquity can be repeated here. Firstly, that grief at the death of a child is expressed by 'the elite and the upwardly mobile', and secondly, that testimonies of grief increase in frequency with the age of the child.<sup>25</sup> Garnsey argues that newborn and very young infants were not yet thought of as full members of society and received less emotional investment from their parents. Displays of grief at the death of very young infants were considered inappropriate (Garnsey 1991: 53; Dixon 1988: 112-114).<sup>26</sup> After a period of one year, however, there is a fair sample of fathers mourning their

<sup>22</sup> In the *Passio SS. Maximae, Secundae et Donatillae*, Secunda, a very young girl from a wealthy family, is exhorted by the other two women not to join them because she is her father's only daughter, and that she cannot abandon him in his old age. Dixon's point (n. 3 in this chapter) that the death of a daughter was counted as a loss of companionship is also valid here.

<sup>23</sup> The point is made by LEFKOWITZ (1981): 'The motivations for St Perpetua's martyrdom', 54, that there is 'a distinctive emphasis in stories of Christian women's martyrdom on separation from the family and on death as a means to life'.

<sup>24</sup> Lefkowitz (1981: 56-57) is persuaded that Perpetua's dream contests are symbolic of her struggle against the male authority of her father, which is quite possible, although I am less persuaded by her Jungian perspective that this is a rejection of 'unconscious incest' (based on the focus on the father and the absence of the husband). This aspect is further discussed on p. 164-165.

<sup>25</sup> Some interesting discrepancies have been noted in tombstone evidence for children's gravestones in Sitifis by SALLER AND SHAW (1984a): 'Tombstones and Roman family relations in the Principate', 130 n.27. There is a higher incidence of commemoration for children's deaths under 10 years in large centres like Cirta and Lambaesis (8 to 10 % of all gravestones) than in smaller towns like Thagaste or Thibilis (1 to 2 %). Sitifis was anomalous in showing 62 % for children's deaths under 10.

<sup>26</sup> Assessing funerary inscriptions for girls and women is sometimes problematic if the age is not given or is obscured, since the same appreciation of adult and childlike qualities was often voiced:

LAMBÈSE (LAMBAESIS)

D(IS) M(ANIBUS) S(ACRUM) | FL(AVIA) OPTATA HIC | SITA EST V(IXIT) A(NNIS) X... | M(ENSIBUS) XI, D(IEBUS) X; OB

[CIL 3638]



daughters in the children's epitaphs collected from the African provinces. The following epitaph from the tombstone illustrated above and found near Ammaedara, for example, expresses a father's heartfelt loss of his two-year old daughter (the tombstone is illustrated in Figure 4.1 below):<sup>27</sup>

MANIA L(UCI) FILIA SECUNDA H(IC) S(ITA) E(ST) MANIA PUPA IACET PAUCOS DILECTA PER ANNOS | QUAM  
PATER ADQUE DUM DEFLET IPSE QUERELLA EST | NAM HANC TULERAT GENITOR DIVINAE LUCI AD ORAS |  
DULCIUS UT POSSET CUM SPE SPEM PRENDERE MAGNAM | ANTICIPATA FATA TENEBRIS SE CONDIDIT ALTIS |  
NON NASCI MISERAE QUANTO ERAT UTILIUS | VIXIT ANNIS II DIES XIII

Mania Secunda, daughter of Lucius, is laid here. Mania rests, a little girl beloved for so few years, whom her father himself mourns. For the one who begot her brought her to the shores of divine light so that with hope she could take greater hope. Fate anticipated, she was plunged into the deepest shadows. How much better it would have been for the poor girl not to have been born. She lived two years and thirteen days.<sup>28</sup>



FIGURE 4.1 EPITAPH FOR  
A GIRL, MANIA SECUNDA

This epitaph does not reflect the customary attitude in antiquity, which saw children in a practical light as a potential adult, whatever personal relationship may have existed between parent and child.<sup>29</sup> Interesting here is the combination of the Roman epitaph and the use of Roman names, contrasted with the typically Neo-Punic relief which accompanies it. This tombstone would appear therefore to be an example of acculturation of which we would not have been aware had the visual element not survived for posterity, since the epitaph itself is not particularly distinctive.

Another father's loss is recorded by the following metrical inscription from Tipasa [AE 1982, 984]: a father buries his daughter not far from the cliffs from which she fell to her death.

ALTO LABSA LOCO, CASU | DEFUNCTA NEFANDO, |  
PRIMIS RAPTA ANNIS | ISTIC FIDENTIA DORMIT, |  
CUI PATER HUNC TUMULUM, | SIBI HEC SOLACIA FECIT |  
FIDENTIUS FILIAE

From this unfortunate, abominable place the dead girl fell, taken in her first years, over there Fidentia sleeps. Her father Fidentius made this comfort for himself.

The irony of a young death, a familiar *topos*, is pointed out by Ingenuus:

CHERCEL (CAESAREA)

[CIL 9473; CLE 1153]

HOC TUMULO POSITUM EST INGENUI FIL(IA) FLORA | ANNO QUAE VIXIT MENSIBUS ATQ(UE) NOVEN | ET QUAS  
EXSEQUIAS DEBEBAT NATA PARENTI | HAS PATER ADVERSIS CASIBUS IPSE DEDIT | TERRA PRECOR FECUNDA

EXSI | MIAM MORUM | SUOR(UM) LAUDEM | ET SINGULAREM | PUDICITIAM ET | SPECIEM. | T(ITUS) FL(AVIUS)  
POMPO | NIANUS PA | TER.

Consecrated to the souls of the departed. Flavia Optata is buried here, ? years, 11 months and ten days. On account of the exceptional reputation of her habits, exceptional chastity and beauty. Titus Flavius Pomponianus, her father.

In this example there is no way of telling the age at which Flavia Optata died, since stock phrases like *ob exsimiam morum suorum laudem et singularem pudicitiam* are applied to young girls as well as to adults.

<sup>27</sup> Reference MAREC (1966): 'Epitaph d'une enfant morte en bas-âge'. Interesting here is the style of the relief, which is undoubtedly Punic while the inscription is very Roman.

<sup>28</sup> Marec (1966) interprets the epitaph as a Christian father's grief that his daughter has not yet received baptism and is therefore eternally damned, a plausible but unsubstantiated conjecture. The inscription has religious overtones which would appear not to be Christian given the reference to 'fate' and the 'deepest shadows' (*Anticipata fata tenebris se condidit altis*). The reference to the *divinae luci* may refer to another cult.

<sup>29</sup> HEMELRIJK (1999): *Matrona docta*, 60, comments on Pliny's account of the death of the twelve-year old Minicia Marcella [Ep. 5.16]: 'Children, especially those who died prematurely .... are portrayed as the persons they would have become, had they lived, and this made their loss the more distressing.'



LEVIS SUPER OSSA RESIDAS | AESTUET INFANTIS NE GRAVITATE CINIS

Flora, daughter of Ingenuus, is placed in this tomb. She lived one year and nine months, and that funeral which she should have given her parents her father instead is giving her. Fertile earth, I beg you rest lightly, that her ashes may not be disturbed by the weight.

Nearly all the epitaphs erected by parents to their young daughters make use of a variety of fairly specific laments and epithets, at least compared to the greater proportion of commemorations for adult women, which tend to be blander and more conventional.<sup>30</sup> Where Successus misses his eight year old daughter every hour (*omni / hora desiran/[ti]ssimae*) [CIL 16410; ILT 1566], the father of Iulia Paulo cannot say enough about the beauty of his daughter [ILA 158; CLE p. 68]. Luxorius writing under Vandal rule still found the death of a father's daughter an occasion for pathos when he penned the poem entitled *Epitaphion de filia Oageis infantula* [Epigr. 59], listing the girl's attributes in what were still considered the ideal female virtues in his own time, terms such as *vita innocua*, ... *Grata nimis specie, verecundo garrula vultu / Naturae ingenio modicos superavat annos* ('...her innocent life, ... She fulfilled her short life with every kind of merit. Most pleasing in appearance, chattering and of modest mien, she had a natural talent far beyond her years').

Tertullian takes the closeness of the father-daughter relationship to extremes when he rails against the incest that takes place in families, either wittingly from lust ('which will produce children to you unawares', *nescientibus filios edat*) or unwittingly (when infants are exposed and end up in brothels to be visited by their own fathers) [Ad Nat. 1.16]. This is not an area about which we would expect to find much information, since it was abhorred by Roman culture - though it may have occurred, of course. In the same context Tertullian refers to the fact that incest was common practice among the Macedonians and the Persians to such an extent that they failed to see the point of Oedipus' act of self-mutilation.<sup>31</sup> Brother-sister marriage was entirely acceptable in neighbouring Egypt as late as the Ptolemaic dynasty. Ostensibly the claim was that the royal dynasty could not intermarry with an inferior bloodline<sup>32</sup> and were thus forced to marry each other, but this was probably also a form of consolidating family assets, and it is possible that such attitudes permeated to the central and western African provinces in Roman times, as Clark (1993: 41-43) claims for the eastern provinces. However it is more likely that this is just another example of the rhetoric which Tertullian aimed at pagan society in response to accusations of Christian licentious behaviour.<sup>33</sup> There is no other specific evidence of father-daughter incest to substantiate his claim.

In conclusion it would appear that while exposure of girl children was practised, fathers could and did have close non-sexual relationships with their young daughters, as is illustrated by a number of inscriptions and texts which emphasize loss and idealize the qualities of the dead child, often by giving her attributes more suitable to older girls or women.

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<sup>30</sup> This can be compared with the typical commemoration for adult women, as for example on p. 124.

<sup>31</sup> See the discussion by LEE (1988): 'Close-kin marriage in Late-Antique Mesopotamia' as well as the comparison by CHADWICK (1979): 'The relativity of moral codes: Rome and Persia in Late Antiquity'.

<sup>32</sup> 'It was essential that [the pharaoh's] immediate heir should possess the strongest possible strain of royal blood' (Manchip-White 1970: 15). According to Diodorus Siculus [1.27] the Egyptians took the consanguineous marriage of Isis and Osiris as their model. CERNÝ (1954): 'Consanguineous marriages in Pharaonic Egypt', argues that in Egypt marriages of close blood relatives outside the royal dynasties were more common in the Roman period, in imitation of the Ptolemaic dynasties, rather than inherited from them.

<sup>33</sup> Other examples of father-daughter incest in Roman antiquity are also found in rhetorical or sensational settings, for example Suetonius [Calig. 36] or Tacitus [Ann. 6.19]. Augustine also expressed his views on endogamy and incest, following the basic rule that there should be no overlap of family affection and marital love [De Civ. Dei 15.16].



Since it appears that fathers usually erected the tombstones, the relationship between mothers and daughters is less well attested in inscriptions.<sup>34</sup> Indirect references such as *CIL* 8896, an inscription set up by the husband of the departed Papinia Quinta, imply little more than that there was such a relationship by acknowledging the mother's role in procreation: *optima quam mat[er Flavia?] progenuit*.<sup>35</sup> The silence of the literary sources is probably a reflection of the disinterest of male authors in such matters. Statistics compiled by Shaw (1987a: 46) indicate that in the African provinces 56 % of commemorations of daughters are set up by fathers compared to the 30% erected by their mothers, a much higher differential than for Rome, Northern Italy, Southern Italy, Spain and the Danube region.<sup>36</sup> Such statistics are often speculative, since they may also be driven by circumstance, such as the death of either parent. It is also possible that, if many Roman citizens married local women, in some cases mothers were less Romanized and therefore less likely to set up inscriptions. In an epitaph from Caesarea [*AE* 1985, 958], only the mother and a younger brother are 'addressed' by the deceased girl, an indication that her father was either dead or no longer a part of their lives:

[EG]O QUAE IACEO FATIS SUM RAPTA SINISTRIS, |  
[S]ECTA MEIS SEMPER DULCIS UBIQUE FUI. |  
SINE FUNESTOS, MATER, IAM SCINDERE CRINES |  
ATQUE LEVA LUCTUS, FRATER UTIQUE MINOR.

I who lie here was slain by the inauspicious fates, cut off from my own. I was always kind everywhere. Cease now mother, to tear your hair in mourning for the dead, and lighten your grief, especially, little brother.

In another case mentioned by Augustine, a girl is taken in by the Church when her father dies. About her mother he makes only the following remark:

*Fortassis enim, quae nunc non apparet, apparebit et mater....*

For perhaps the girl's mother will come forward, though she has not come forward as yet....

[*Ep.* 254.]

Augustine clearly does not have any means of contacting the girl's mother, and she is treated as an orphan, although he states in the same letter that he would cede to the mother's wishes in the handling of her daughter. But these were unusual circumstances. Otherwise, it was taken as a matter of course that a father had the larger right and authority over his legitimate children:

*Filium autem vestrum, quoniam de legitimis eum et honestis nuptiis suscepisti, magis in patris quam in tua esse potestate quis nesciat?*

And as for your son, who does not know that, since you got him in lawful wedlock, his father has greater authority over him than you have?

[*Aug., Ep.* 262.11]

Mothers were traditionally assumed to be an example to their daughters both morally and in training them in their own crafts and skills. In her epitaph a mother prays that her daughter may grow to love her husband by the example of her parents [*CIL* 8123; *CLE* 1287; *ILAlg* II 281]. Apuleius also takes the power of the mother's example (*disciplina* <*m*> *matris*) for granted when he accuses the daughter of Rufinus as being as debauched as her mother [*Apol.* 76.2-6].<sup>37</sup>

<sup>34</sup> For a general perspective but relying heavily on imperial models, see PHILLIPS (1978): 'Roman mothers and the lives of their adult daughters'.

<sup>35</sup> DIXON (1988): *The Roman mother*, 220, concludes that for the Roman context the father was the usual person to commemorate a child, with the mother often a secondary dedicant.

<sup>36</sup> For the province of Spain the situation is reversed: fathers erecting epitaphs for their daughters number only 14% of the total, where mothers number 58%.

<sup>37</sup> Juvenal voices the same views - how can one expect women to be virtuous when they have the appalling example of their mothers before them? [6.239-240].

Regarding the relationship between mother and daughter, Dixon (1988: 211) concludes from the Roman evidence that it was one of 'maternal authority and mutual affection', although it is difficult to deduce this from the epigraphical evidence since tombstones erected for mothers by daughters use much the same stereotypical language that is used by sons, and Roman African literature is silent on this point. Dixon (1988: 222) points out that while duty and obedience were ideally the characteristic attitude of all children towards a mother, a daughter's obligation would have been more far-reaching firstly because she and her mother shared the same experience of life and secondly because women were brought up to be obedient. A daughter too would acknowledge a mother's potential as benefactor when it came to dowries and inheritance.

### **Young girls' contact beyond the nuclear family**

It was the Roman ideal for the mother to nurse and to educate her children, but at Rome those able to afford it regularly used nurses and pedagogues (Veyne 1987:14). Also in Africa among the local urban aristocracies these individuals were sometimes used to bring up a child till the age of puberty, but the references are not many and this may imply that the practice was less common than in Rome.<sup>38</sup> One of the two inscriptions which specifically attest to the use of slaves as nurses reveals that a close relationship could exist between child and nurse: Cerdonius erected the tombstone for his dearest nurse (*sua nutrix carissima*) [CIL 27988; ILAlg I 3790]. There is no evidence for epitaphs erected by women for their nurses, probably because women changed households when they married and started with families of their own at a relatively young age, although Monica took her nurse with her when she married [Conf. 9.8.17].

A *paedagogus* such as the one attested in CIL 3322 (or a *paedagoga* [CIL 1506]) probably accompanied children to school, although it was also possible that they gave younger children a basic education at home.<sup>39</sup> Augustine mentions that his mother and her sisters were brought up by a *famula decrepita* [Conf. 9.8.17] who taught them basic social skills while she cared for them, for example how and when to drink water (when they were adult they would be permitted to drink wine).<sup>40</sup> This type of information does indicate that in Roman Africa it was considered normal for boys and girls of the propertied status groups to experience relationships with persons other than their parents and siblings.

## **EDUCATION FOR GIRLS AND WOMEN**

### **The nature and quality of African education**

The quality and importance of a formal education generally is well attested among the élite of Roman African cities. At its culmination Africa produced men of letters such as Fronto, Apuleius, Minucius Felix, Lactantius, Florentinus and Augustine, who, like Apuleius in the extract from the *Florida* below, often praised their native

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<sup>38</sup> There are only four extant epigraphical examples [CIL 2889; 2917; 27988 = ILAlg I 3790 and CIL 13191], and literary references limited to Augustine [Conf. 1.14] are outnumbered by references from the same author to mothers caring for their own children [Conf. 1.6.7-1.7.11; Enarr. in Ps. 130; Serm. 117], although these examples are heavily influenced by Christian ideology. See the full discussion of this issue on p. 156-159.

<sup>39</sup> Compare for example the case of Attica [Cic., Ep. ad Att. 12.33] or Minicia Marcella [Pliny, Ep. 5.16]. BRADLEY (1991): *Discovering the Roman family*, concludes that the chances of a girl child having a *paedagogus* were half of that of a boy, 47-48; 51-55.

<sup>40</sup> This corresponds in concept to the more detailed description of the pedagogue by Clement of Alexandria in his *Paedagogus*, 'a second-century guide to deportment and etiquette for Christians ... including table manners' (Clark 1998: 171).



province for this characteristic:<sup>41</sup>

*Quae autem maior laus aut certior, quam Karthagini benedicere, ubi tota civitas eruditissimi estis, pene<s> quos omnem disciplinam pueri discunt, iuvenes ostentant, senes docent? Karthago provinciae nostrae magistra venerabilis, Karthago Africae Musa caelestis, Karthago Camena togatorum.*

What subject for praise is greater and more worthy to celebrate than Carthage where I see among you in the entire city only cultivated men and where everyone is versed in all the sciences: children so they can learn them, young men to display their knowledge, old men to teach them? Carthage - venerable school of our province; Carthage, celestial Muse of Africa. And finally, Carthage, inspiring nymph Camoena of the people who wear the toga.

[Flor. 20]

Already in the 2<sup>nd</sup> century AD Juvenal referred to Africa as 'nurse of lawyers' (*nutricula causidicorum*) and sarcastically exhorts those who want to make a fortune to cross the sea to Africa [Sat. 7.147-149]. By the early 3<sup>rd</sup> century Tertullian in his *De Pallio* [2.1-3] assumed that his Latin-speaking audience in Carthage was conversant enough with Plato to understand his reference to Plato's world (the world of forms) and his Atlantis myth.<sup>42</sup> The cities of Hadrumetum, Cirta, Theveste and especially Carthage had schools with a well-established reputation by the time of the Antonines, and Carthage was still a centre of learning as late as the first half of the 6<sup>th</sup> century [Florentinus, *Anthol. Lat.* 376.32-33]. But the rather pedantic style of some African professors is mocked by Augustine in his *Confessiones* [1.18.29].<sup>43</sup> The fact that Apuleius, like Pudentilla's elder son Pontianus, and so many others, left Africa to study elsewhere is an indication that Africa was not considered to be on a par with Athens and Rome, despite Apuleius' florid words of praise quoted above.<sup>44</sup> Fronto, another African-born writer and contemporary of Apuleius, then tutor to Marcus Aurelius in Latin rhetoric, addressed a letter written in Greek to the emperor's mother, Domitia Lucilla, which he requested Marcus Aurelius to read first to correct his Greek [*Ad M. Caes.* 1.8.7]. While it is possible that Fronto was being politely deferential in writing that his provincial Greek education was inferior to both that of Domitia Lucilla and Marcus Aurelius, by the 4<sup>th</sup> century Augustine, growing up in his native Thagaste, was to be taught in the Latin authors but clearly his instruction in Greek was very limited indeed [*Conf.* 1.12.20].<sup>45</sup>

Education remained largely secular even in Late Antiquity, when the university life in Africa was still active and rooted in the pagan texts, as the writings of Victor Vitensis (5<sup>th</sup> century) and Corippus (6<sup>th</sup> century) reveal by their use of Classical models and references to pagan works.

The importance of education for men with political ambitions is well attested in Roman culture. In Augustine's time the advantage of education helped to make one a full citizen of a Roman town, even if one were not wealthy

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<sup>41</sup> *Illic artium liberalium scholae. Illic philosophorum officina, cuncta denique vel linguarum gymnasia vel morum* [Salvian, *De Gub. Dei*, 7.6] and Augustine [*De Ut. Cred.* 7.16-17]. Several African inscriptions attest to keen students and their accomplishments: *CIL* 12152; 8500; 3338; 5530; 724.

<sup>42</sup> Neo-Platonism had become popular in some circles and was even reconciled with some Punic traditions (Mahjoubi *et al* 1981: 497).

<sup>43</sup> In Rome students from the African provinces were numerous. In the *Codex Theodosianus* [14.9.1] there is a reference to the fact that complaints had been made about the dissipated behaviour of these students and unless they modified their frivolous habits they would be posted back home.

<sup>44</sup> Apuleius describes his home town of Madauros as being a provincial backwater [24.1] and that he left to acquire an education [Flor. 9; 18.15-16]. Two centuries later Augustine went first to Madauros and then to Carthage for his own education [*Conf.* 2.3.5]. In Late Antiquity Alexandria became one of the foremost reputable centres of learning, as attested in the writings of Athanasius (Brakke 1995: 3-4).

<sup>45</sup> A discussion of the knowledge of Greek among the Roman African population can be found in N. FICK (1987): 'Le milieu culturel africain à l'époque antonine et le témoignage d'Apulée', *Bulletin de l'Association G. Budé*, 285-296 (reference in Bradley 1997: 214 n.20). On Augustine's knowledge of Greek see the arguments by COMBÈS (1927): *Saint Augustin et la culture classique*, 4-6, and MARROU (1958): *Saint Augustin et la fin de la culture classique*, 28-37.



[*Conf.* 2.3.5]). Augustine's cousins had to do without an education and their future was limited [*De B. Vita* 1.6]. For women, however, the benefits of education were more indirect.

### The purpose of education for women

The above extract quoted from the *Florida* of Apuleius emphasizes that the *display* of education is limited specifically to the *iuvenes* or young men.<sup>46</sup> Why, then, were women sometimes educated? The answer to this is that it was the Roman ideal that young children should be nurtured by their mother, and woman's education had a primarily vicarious worth of passing on something of the Roman values in the early formative years of their sons. This appears to be the strongest motivation for female education in the Roman tradition.<sup>47</sup> In an élite municipal context one might expect a similar emphasis on such a process, but our sources are largely silent on the matter. Apart from Pudentilla's educational role in her sons' lives,<sup>48</sup> only one Christian epitaph [*CIL* 20913] refers to a woman as *aeducatrix* of her sons, daughters and grandchildren,<sup>49</sup> while another, found at Val d'Or near Cirta, comes close in praising a mother who *filios monuit bene*, 'advised her sons well' [*AE* 1966, 639].<sup>50</sup>

Another benefit from female education, voiced by Plutarch [*Coniug. Praec.*, 145c-d], is to teach your wife what you know because this will divert her from 'unsuitable conduct' (τῶν ἀτόπων) and frivolity - in other words it will keep her busy and encourage modesty. Although Greek in sentiment, the Romans would have found no fault with this line of reasoning.

There was one last purpose to female education, which was to enable a woman to earn a living. This usually took the form of a practical education in hairdressing or sewing, but a woman's literary education could result in a different and more unusual outcome. An inscription dating from the middle of the second century [*AE* 1994, 1903] places a woman's literary education in this irregular context, the first time that a *grammatica* is attested in Roman epigraphy.<sup>51</sup> The dedicator hastens to assure the reader, however, that Volusia Tertullina was a chaste wife (*marita casta*) first and an excellent teacher (*incomparabili grammatica*) second.

### The nature of education for women in Africa: elementary, advanced and adult education

Since the nature of a literary education was aimed at instilling Roman values and *mores*, its contents could

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<sup>46</sup> But there are exceptions, as in the passive display of education in the case of Aelia Arisuth (see below). A general background to the nature of education for men in ancient Rome is provided by BONNER (1977): *Education in ancient Rome*, for Africa Proconsularis OPEKU (1993): 'Popular and higher education in Africa Proconsularis'.

<sup>47</sup> A mother's educational influence on her sons is exemplified in Cornelia, mother of the Gracchi, by Quintilian [*Instit. Orat.* 1.1.6] and by Cicero below, who both mention that she did her duty as educator: the Gracchi brothers learnt their mother's style at her knee:

*Fuit Gracchus diligentia Corneliae matris a puero doctus et Graecis litteris eruditus*

Gracchus, thanks to the affectionate pains of his mother Cornelia, had been trained from boyhood and was thoroughly grounded in Greek letters. [Brut. 27]

and

*Legimus epistulas Corneliae matris Gracchorum; apparet filios non tam in gremio educatos quam in sermone matris.*

We have read the letters of Cornelia, mother of the Gracchi; they make it plain that her sons were nursed not less by their mother's speech than at her breast. [Brut. 58]

<sup>48</sup> This is discussed in more detail below (p. 161).

<sup>49</sup> MATHESON (2000): 'The elder Claudia: older women in Roman art', 128, translates this as 'bringer-up' in the context of another inscription [*CIL* VI 1478]: *avia carissima educatrix dulcissima* = most beloved grandmother, sweetest bringer-up.

<sup>50</sup> The Roman African mother's role in the lives of her adult children is discussed in more detail in Chapter 6.

<sup>51</sup> The *grammatica* will be discussed more fully in Chapter 9 under professions for women.



equally well be taught to girls, and this seems quite often to have been the case in the Roman family (Hemelrijk 1999: 21-26). Daughters were often included in the education facilities created for sons, even though our Roman sources often neglect to mention them. But while girls in the Roman African context may have been included in the initial phases of education for the reasons above, in the more advanced stages of education women are seldom mentioned, since by the time boys continued their education by attaching themselves to an established orator possibly in Carthage or outside Africa, girls were respectably married.

### (i) elementary education

We know from other evidence that children of both sexes in Roman society could receive some elementary education in basic literacy from the age of about six years by the *ludi magister*, although there seems to be no actual evidence for the unsubstantiated statement made by Soren *et al* (1990: 223) that 'Africans, both boys and girls were unusually well educated until they were sixteen', since the authors probably mean 'unusual' compared to Rome, which is not corroborated by the evidence. I suspect that this may be an impression created by the emphasis which African authors put on education in general which is linked to their desire for Romanization and Roman 'polish'. Roman tradition in the education of girls was undoubtedly the strongest motivation for their education in Africa, but the concept may have fallen on fertile soil since there was also a possible Punic tradition that aristocratic women receive an education as indicated in the case of Sophonisba discussed above, and this may well have given extra emphasis to the Roman tradition as it had developed by the end of the 1<sup>st</sup> century BC.<sup>52</sup> Thus it is not entirely implausible that a father can place on an epitaph for his daughter, Julia Paula, who died at the age of sixteen, the following:

HAIDRA (AMMAEDARA) [ILA 158; CLE 68]  
D(IS) M(ANIBUS) S(ACRUM) | OMNES VICISTI SPE | CIE  
DOCTRINA PUEL | LA(S) IULIA CARA MIHI FA | TIS  
ABDUCTA PATERNIS | AURO NIL ALIUT PRETIO | SIUS  
ATQUE CYLINDRO | NIL TYRIO SUCCO FORMO | SIUS  
ADQUE LACONE MAR | MORE NIL PARIO  
SPLEN | DENTIUS ADQ(UE) CARIS [T]IO | NIL FORMA  
MELIUS S[EU] PULCHRIUS ESSE LIC[EBIT] | LANIFICA  
NULLA POT[EST] | CON[TEN]DERE ARACHNE | CANTU  
SIRENAS P[AND]I[O] NIDASQUE SORORES ET | SPECIE  
SUPERASTI | QUAE SUNT SUPERONIA DICTA TU QUAE  
GRAIU | GENO SATA HEROE | PARENTE NATA BIS |  
OCTONOS LETALI FU | NERE RAPTA HOC SI | TA NUNC  
IACEO IULIA | PAULA ROGO

Consecrated to the souls of the departed. You excelled all girls in conspicuous learning, dear Iulia, stolen away from me by a father's fate. Nothing is more precious than gold and a polished jewel, more beautiful than Tyrian dye, or more brilliant than Laconian, Parian or Carian marble. No shape could be better or more beautiful. No Arachne can compete in spinning. You surpassed the Sirens in singing, and the sisters, the brood of Pandion. And in beauty you surpassed those things mentioned above. You who sprang from Hero, a Greek-born mother, snatched away by gloomy death at



FIGURE 4.2 CHILD OF LEARNING

<sup>52</sup> On the importance of education and the prevalence of teaching girls by this period, see HEMELRIJK (1999): *Matrona docta*, 20-57; BEST (1970): 'Cicero, Livy and educated women'.



sixteen years. Now I lie, Iulia Paula, placed in this tomb.

*Doctrina* in the *TLL* is defined as erudition or learning, in other words as the product of study rather than natural intelligence or wisdom. A similar meaning can be attached to a sarcophagus relief from Tunisia. Figure 4.2 shows a young person who at one time held a scroll in the left hand, and scrolls are also in evidence tied together on the floor. The skeletal remains are those of a child of twelve of undetermined sex. There seems to be some doubt as to whether this figure taken from the side of the sarcophagus is male or female (Fournet-Pilipenko 1961-2: 94).<sup>53</sup> Differing opinions are based on the hairstyle, which is interpreted as (a) a female hairstyle of the Trajanic-Hadrianic period combined with the African custom of shaving the head leaving a central braid, referred to below<sup>54</sup> (b) a female hairstyle of the Julia Domna type (c) a young boy with a diadem from the era of Honorius. In citing these opinions Fournet-Pilipenko is in favour of a female figure. The short length of the pallium is no obstacle to a female identity since a large number of parallels for girls are in existence (Fournet-Pilipenko 1961-2: 94 n. 30).

But undoubtedly such explicit expressions of learning for girls or young women are unusual. Proud parents or husbands attesting to the intelligence of their daughters (or wives) more usually employed the word *sapiens* in describing the one they had lost. In the following epitaph a girl of fifteen is described:

CHERCEL (CAESAREA) [AE 1978, 896]  
 MARCIA ROGA[TA] | CYT[IS]S ANNOR(UM) XV, [MEN]S(IUM) [...]. | H[AEC F]UIT PIA ET SAPIENS | ULTRAMODUM  
 AETATIS, VELUT | CONTENDENTE SENSU CUM | CELERITATE FATORUM.  
 Marcia Rogata Cytisis lived 15 years ? months. She was dutiful and wise beyond her years, just as if her understanding were trying to outdo the swiftness of the fates.

The husband of Titinia saw fit to use this one adjective to describe his wife on her tombstone:

TEBESSA (THEVESTE) [AE 1995, 1698]  
 D(IS) M(ANIBUS) S(ACRUM) / TITINIA SA/PIENS V(IXIT) A(NNIS) XXXV D(IEBUS) XV / POMPEIUS TELESINUS  
 MA/RITUS FEC(IT).  
 Consecrated to the souls of the departed. Wise Titinia, who lived 35 years, 15 days. Pompeius Telesinus, her husband, erected this.

McKechie (1994: 289) argues that girls in the time of Perpetua were unlikely to have been taught at home by individual tutors, since parents would not go to the expense of hiring tutors for girls when, Quintilian tells us, they had not done so for boys since the end of the Republican period.<sup>55</sup> Most fair-sized cities had facilities for elementary education to which children of both sexes were admitted if their parents had the means, or if they were otherwise sponsored.<sup>56</sup> Other chance references attest to the presence of girls in African schools: Apuleius

<sup>53</sup> BANDINELLI (1971): *Rome: the Late Empire*, 222, assumes for example that the figure is female.

<sup>54</sup> See p. 140 n. 76.

<sup>55</sup> The *ludi magister* or school teacher charged about 1/4 of what a *grammaticus* could charge (McKechie 1994: 289). On the use of tutors versus schools in Rome, see BONNER (1977): *Education in ancient Rome*, 10-64.

<sup>56</sup> A patron of Sicca Veneria, the procurator P. Licinius, left money of which the interest was to be used for the upbringing of 300 boys from three to fifteen years of age and 200 girls between the ages of three to thirteen:

[Berbrugger, *Revue Africaine* i.273; reference in Graham 1902:86]  
 MUNICIPIBUS MEIS CIRTHENSIBUS | SICCENSIBUS CARISSIMIS MIHI DARE | VOLO HS XIII VESTRAE FIDEI  
 COMMITTO | MUNICIPES CARISSIMI UT EX USURIS | EIUS SUMMAE QUINCUNCIBUS QUODAN | NIS ALANTUR  
 PUERI CCC ET PUELLAE CC | PUERIS | AB ANIIS TRIBUS AD ANNOS XV ET | ACCIPIANT | SINGULA PUERI  
 \* IIS MENSTRUOS | PUELLAE | AB ANNIS TRIBUS AD ANNOS XIII

For my dear fellow-citizens of the municipia Cirta and Sicca I wish to give 13 million sesterces, entrusted to you so that from the interest of 5 percent per annum 300 boys (from three years to fifteen) and 200 girls (from three to thirteen years) may be brought up (*alesco*), so that each child may receive that monthly.

A situation similar to the support of 300 children (264 boys and 36 girls) in the district of Velleia near Parma from the interest of a sum



in the *Metamorphoses* [9.17] mentions the wife of a baker (*pistoris uxor*) who as a girl had gone to school with her contemporary, now the wife of a decurion - we may assume that, in the eyes of the author at least, the wife of the baker was a woman of fairly humble status. The *Passio* provides some detailed evidence of one well-educated young woman, Perpetua. At the beginning of the account Perpetua is referred to by her by the ancient editor as *liberaliter instituta* [2.1], which implies an education beyond the range of the traditional Roman elementary level, and therefore tuition by a *grammaticus*.<sup>57</sup> Studies referred to by McKechnie (W.T. Shewring in 1929 and Åke Fridh in 1968) note the use of Silver Latin style in the *Passio* and that Perpetua wrote in 'rhythmical prose', a style which was taught as part of rhetorical composition and after the basic education in poetry, and therefore at a relatively advanced stage in education. McKechnie uses three examples to argue the sophistication of Perpetua's education: the 'Platonic 'feel' in the dialogue between father and daughter [3.1-2], the application of the *argumentum ad hominem* in 16.2-4, and Perpetua's personal authority, demonstrated in the first instance in getting the tribune to 'blush with embarrassment' and give them better accommodation, and again in succeeding to dissuade the authorities to dress them in the costumes of the priests of Saturn, in a manner which 'bears the Platonistic stamp that literary education bore in the Second Sophistic period' (McKechnie 1994: 283). Another aspect of Perpetua's education is intimated when in her own account she relates how she conversed in Greek with the bishop and a priest [13.4]. Since Saturus does not comment on her ability to speak Greek, it seems unlikely that her knowledge of this language was suddenly acquired in the dream context. It would appear then that Perpetua's education in Greek was at least adequate.<sup>58</sup>

There was no specifically Christian education, since education remained largely secular during the period under discussion.<sup>59</sup> Perpetua may have been well versed in Biblical quotations, but clearly had a good Classical educational basis. Clark (1993: 136) could well be right, however, in thinking that, as in the case of Macrina at Nyssa, many girls were nurtured on the scriptures while boys continued with the more traditional Classical education. Augustine took it for granted that a nunnery would have a library when he specifically mentions a nun in charge of it in his letter describing his Rule [*Ep.* 211.13], just as Ambrose tells us that nuns read the books in the Church libraries in Milan [*De Virg.* 3.4.15]. Already from an early date many African churches had their own libraries, as for example at Hippo [*Aug., Ep.* 231.7] and at Cirta (mentioned in the Acts of Purgation of Felix and Caecilian at the beginning of the 4<sup>th</sup> century AD).

## (ii) adult education:

The average age at a first marriage for women in Roman Africa was between fourteen and twenty years.<sup>60</sup> It is quite possible on the one hand that women who married later had more of an opportunity to avail themselves

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advanced by the emperor Trajan (Graham 1902: 86). The official publicity given to the emperor's benevolence towards children was typical of the imperial house of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century (Dixon 1988: 88).

<sup>57</sup> Detailed discussions of Perpetua's education can be found in DRONKE (1984): *Women writers of the Middle Ages*, 1-17, and also in the article by MCKECHNIE (1994): 'St Perpetua and Roman education'; some insightful comments by HEMELRIJK (1999): *Matrona docta*, 185; 208; 250n.136; 285-6n.155, although Perpetua falls outside the scope of her study.

<sup>58</sup> It is true that Perpetua's bother, Dinocrates, bears a Greek name, and there is a possibility that she may not necessarily have acquired her knowledge of Greek through education only, but the name Dinocrates is also one that was often used by Africans (Ferguson 1969: 182).

<sup>59</sup> Only in the 10<sup>th</sup> century were women discouraged from reading the Classics (Patlagean 1987: 579)

<sup>60</sup> Age at marriage is fully discussed on pp. 91-94.



of formal schooling. Vibia Perpetua, for example, who married at the age of 18 or 19 (relatively late by Roman standards), was very well educated. But education for women did not necessarily end when they married, and sometimes continued on an informal basis.<sup>61</sup> In the *Apologia* Apuleius relates:

*Haec omnia adnexus impenso studio persuadet, matrem suam suumque fraterem, puerum istum, mihi commendat.  
Non nihil a me in communibus studiis adiuvantur, augetur oppido familiaritas.*

He ... strongly recommended his mother and his brother - that boy there - to my consideration. I gave them some help in our common studies.<sup>62</sup> [Apol. 73.1]

Apuleius was clearly proud of his wife's education, although admittedly it was in his best interests to promote her intelligence and independent mind. But if it had been Apuleius' intention to play down his influence over Pudentilla, to emphasize his role in her education would serve no purpose. Perhaps Apuleius wanted to invoke the image of the husband-as-mentor as exemplified in Pliny's relationship with Calpurnia [Ep. 8.10 and 8.11], suggesting the type of marriage, so common in antiquity, where the husband's seniority in years reinforced a paternalistic attitude towards a young wife. In this way he could also play down the age difference between himself and his older wife. Augustine also sees the ideal wife as one who is either educated or malleable to some further learning at the hands of her husband:

*pulchra, pudica, morigera, litterata, vel quae abs te facile possit erudiri, adferens etiam dotis tantum, quoniam contemnis divitias, quantum eam prorsus nihilo faciat onerosam otio tuo.*

pretty, modest, educated or at least easily educable by you, bringing you just enough dowry - since you despise riches - to make her no kind of burden on your cultivated leisure. [Solil. 1.10.17]

Furthering his impression of Pudentilla as an educated woman in the *Apologia*, Apuleius makes reference to the library in Pudentilla's villa [Apol. 55.3; 53.8], which she had made over to her son.<sup>63</sup> Unfortunately the emphasis on Pudentilla's erudition is not as valuable as it appears at first glance, even though it may tell us something about social perceptions of - and attitudes to - female education. Apuleius' emphasis on Pudentilla's education is also a weapon against the accusation that she was susceptible to magic. To quote Plutarch's opinion on the advantages of female education more fully:

τὰ δὲ τοιαῦτα μαθήματα πρῶτον ἀφίστησι τῶν ἀτόπων τὰς γυναῖκας· αἰσχυνθήσεται γὰρ ὀρχεῖσθαι γυνὴ γεωμετεῖν μανθάνουσα, καὶ φαρμάκων ἐπὶ δᾶς οὐ προσδέξεται τοῖς Πλάτωνος ἐπαδομένη λόγοις καὶ τοῖς Ξενοφώντος.

A woman who understands mathematics will be ashamed to dance. If she hears the magic of Plato's or Xenophon's words, she will not let the magic of witchcraft into her life. [Coniug. Praec., 145d]

Thus an educated woman like Pudentilla would have been less likely to believe that Apuleius had truly practised magic - a perspective that supports Apuleius' reading of the full context of the letter in which Pudentilla mentions Apuleius and his 'spell' on her. Apuleius' portrait of Pudentilla as a highly educated woman reinforces the perhaps self-evident fact that for women this was one of the factors of autonomy and independence, since through this portrayal Apuleius can implicitly exonerate himself from having an undue and even magical influence over her.

<sup>61</sup> Seneca bemoans the fact that his father followed the ancestral custom and did not permit his mother to be educated in philosophy, since women with learning used it not for wisdom but for display [Ep. 17.4]. Informal education for women is also mentioned by Pliny the Younger of Pompeius Saturninus, whose wife was said to write such exceptional letters. Pliny is sceptical about whether or not she really wrote them herself, but if she did, he credits her husband 'for the way in which he has cultivated and refined the taste of the girl he married' [Ep. 1.16], something Pliny is clearly encouraging in his own wife [Ep. 4.19].

<sup>62</sup> HUNINK (1977): *Apuleius of Madauros: Pro se de magia*, 188, suggests that *in communibus studiis* suggests either the *studia litterarum* mentioned at Apol. 5.1 or the *studia liberalia* mentioned at Apol. 28.9 - literature, philosophy, but probably not rhetoric.

<sup>63</sup> The library must have been of some size, given the fact that the servant is called a *promus librorum* [Apol. 55.3].



Very occasionally women in Roman antiquity also showed an interest in philosophy, although there is very little evidence from the Roman African provinces for the type of philosophical interest which Julia Domna reputedly pursued.<sup>64</sup> Even by the 4<sup>th</sup> century it must have been an unusual feature for Augustine, in the dialogue *De Beata Vita*, to introduce a woman, his mother, as taking an active part in the discussion about a life of philosophical *otium*, which he explains with the following comment:<sup>65</sup>

*matre adhaerente nobis, muliebri habitu, virili fide...*

My mother was also with us, in a woman's habit, but with a manly faith...

[*Conf.* 9.4]

Elsewhere he also records his mother's presence on another occasion with the comment that her natural ability and understanding of things divine was suited to 'true philosophy' (*verae philosophiae*) [*De Ord.* 2.1]. O'Ferrall (1975: 42) interprets this as a change in Augustine's view of his mother, rather than a change in Monica herself. At the beginning of the same work Augustine states that women in earlier generations discussed philosophy [*De Ord.* 1.31]. Doubtlessly he had another model of motherhood in mind, Cornelia, mother of the Gracchi, who was probably of mature age by then.<sup>66</sup> It might be relevant at this point to note that few female philosophers (in terms of teachings and writings) are known from the European side of the Mediterranean.<sup>67</sup> The other female philosophical figures who actually wrote and taught such as Sosipatra and Hypatia came from Pergamum and Alexandria respectively (Clark 1993: 133). The most likely explanation for this is that the Greek and Roman context had gender roles which were more rigid than those in the provincial cities, where other gender attitudes were probably also at play. In the later Roman Empire these foreign influences (such as those evidenced by the Syrian Julia Domna's predilection for surrounding herself with philosophers and other persons of learning) also gained momentum in Rome.

In the house of Gaius Barbarus Pompeianus, the governor of Africa in 400-401, the inscription above the door leading to one of the rooms reads: *Incredula Venila Benefica* - presumably this formed a part of the women's private quarters, since in Late Antiquity women were allocated special rooms within their husbands' opulent villas (Brown 1987: 38). Inside the chamber was a two-part mosaic with inscriptions which probably referred to the different parts of the very rich estate.<sup>68</sup> The upper level represented three pavilions in a landscape setting entitled *pecuarii locus*. In the foreground the mistress of the estate is seated in a high backed chair under a palm tree, fanning herself with her dog at her feet. Her servant protects her from the sun by holding a large parasol.

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<sup>64</sup> Flavius Philostratus speaks of the 'circle around Julia' and calls her 'the philosopher' [*Vit. Sophis.* 2.30; *Vit. Apol. Tyan.* 1.3]

<sup>65</sup> CLARK (1993): *Women in Late Antiquity*, 135, is mistakenly under the impression that Augustine's mother takes no part in the discussion but for a hymn at the end [*De B. Vita* 35].

<sup>66</sup> A philosophical education for women remained the subject for debate it had been in Plato's day. Musonius Rufus, writing in the first century AD in Rome, advocated the same philosophical education for both sexes, since according to him men and women shared the same inclination to virtue, which he proceeds to substantiate by giving a list of female virtues such as φρόνησις, σωφροσύνη, δικαιοσύνη and ἀνδρεία [Fragments 3 and 4]. Lactantius also mentions that according to Stoic tradition philosophical education was as necessary for women as for men [*Div. Instit.* 3.25], and Seneca admits to a female potential for virtue, although he often speaks disparagingly of women [e.g. *De Const. Sap.* 14; *De Ira* 3.24.3]. Women's interest in philosophy is known since Republican Rome (Cornelia, wife of Pompey [Plut., *Pomp.* 55], Cicero's friend Caerellia [Cicero, *Ep. ad Att.* 13.21a]), but are all of course women of the élite.

<sup>67</sup> HAWLEY (1994): 'The problem of women philosophers in ancient Greece' in fact attributes most of these female philosopher figures in ancient Greece to creative writing and concludes that very few of them were 'real' philosophers. If they taught and wrote, no evidence of this remains today.

<sup>68</sup> The original mosaics no longer exist and are known only from drawings which can be viewed in the following works in Paris: A. POULLE (1878): *Rec. Const.* xix, 431-454. C. TISSOT (1884): *Géographie comparée de la province romaine d'Afrique*, plates I to IV. References from Dunbabin (1978: 123; 267).



Overhead is written *Filosofi locus*. Since the original is no longer extant the interpretation of this information is somewhat problematic.<sup>69</sup> The most obvious explanation is that the wording is a compliment to the education of the lady of the manor. She does not appear to be occupied by anything other than her thoughts. During the Late Empire in Africa rich landowners occasionally used images of women in a state of *otium* as an advertisement of their own status, although here the privilege of an education for those of a certain status is also advertised.<sup>70</sup> In the lower divisions agricultural and hunting scenes feature Pompeianus himself, with a final scene where the huntsmen return home to a banquet featuring six ladies dressed in an oriental style, with extravagant headdresses and heavily bejewelled arms and necks. The magnificence and grandeur of the life of the nobleman on his estate are typically asserted in the manner of late 4<sup>th</sup> century mosaics. Perhaps the lofty occupation of his wife was the reason for the frivolous ladies in the lower register, but it is equally likely that they may have been the wives of the other hunters.<sup>71</sup>

### **The results of women's education**

We are not told a great deal about the results of female education since this was not in accordance with the Roman ideal of the *matrona* devoted to her husband and family rather than her own achievements. Only in a few instances is women's education advertised and seen as an asset by others, as in the case of Gaius Barbarus Pompeianus mentioned above. In the 2<sup>nd</sup> century Pudentilla was conversant enough with Greek to write letters, as Apuleius proudly attests [*Apol.* 30.8; 87.3; 98.6], and had a sense of irony [*Apol.* 78.5-86 (Hunink 1998: 278)]. Apuleius indeed claims great fluency in both the reading and writing of Greek and Latin for his wife, and since her letter is produced as physical proof, this must be something which we can accept as factual. In the case of both these women their station in life would have given them access to better education: Pudentilla was of equestrian family in the city of Oea, and Perpetua of high-ranking decurial family in Thuburbo Minus (*honeste nata* [*Passio P&F* 2.1]). Being conversant in Greek had a certain display value for the educated élite, perhaps all the more so because they came from the provinces. A mastery of Greek proclaimed social standing.<sup>72</sup> It is not surprising that nothing of the letters written by women remains - in view of the way women's virtues were defined by society as modest and retiring, to have a private letter of a woman published in the manner that those of Fronto had been (albeit posthumously) would have brought shame on her family. In court Apuleius rebukes his accusers for quoting from Pudentilla's private letter to her son in public as against 'common humanity' (*saltem humanum*) and against 'decency' (*pudorem*) [*Apol.* 84.15]. Perpetua's text remains to us because of the theological purposes of the ancient editor of the text, and were it not for this we might never even have heard of her, nor, as Hemelrijk (1999: 208) points out, 'would we have believed that such a work could be written by a provincial woman of her age'. Only incidentally do we hear of women writing letters, such as in the case of Prejecta, Justinian's niece, who wrote to her uncle from Africa to intercede for Gontharis [Procop., *De Bello Vand.* 4.27.20].

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<sup>69</sup> But see G. BOISSIER (1912): *L'Afrique romaine*, Paris, 152-164, photo nr 4 (reference in Ladjimi-Sebaï 1977: 320).

<sup>70</sup> In discussing a relief from Rome, KAMPEN (1982): 'Social status and gender in Roman art. The case of the saleswoman', 70, notes that 'for men like the cloth merchant, pampered wife could signal upward mobility'

<sup>71</sup> Eastern influence can be clearly inferred when the ladies' dress is compared to the tiaras and veils of the women in one of the wall paintings of the Temple of the Palmyrene Gods (or Temple of Bel) (Goldman 1994: 174 n.17).

<sup>72</sup> As for example in the case of Melania the Younger, who was fluent in both Greek and Latin, or the mother of Marcus Aurelius to whom Fronto wrote his letters.



But an overt display of education is also seen in the 4<sup>th</sup> century tomb painting of Aelia Arisuth discovered at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century at Gargàresch (a few kilometres from Oea), illustrated below.<sup>73</sup> The inscription above the portrait reads:

GARGÀRESH

[CIL 22687; AE 1904, 19; ROMANELLI, 1981, 405ff]

D(IS) M(ANIBUS) S(ACRUM) | AELIA ARISUTH | VIXIT ANNOS | SEXAGINTA | PLUS MINUS

Consecrated to the souls of the departed. Aelia Arisuth lived approximately sixty years.

And on the slabs covering the hollow beneath the niche:

QUAE LEA IACET

The lioness who lies (here)

The nomen 'Aelia' indicates that an ancestor was enfranchised under one of the Antonines, while the cognomen 'Arisuth' is of Punic origin, like the origins of the town of Oea itself, and is attested in various forms in seven inscriptions from this area.<sup>74</sup>

The portrait of Aelia Arisuth shows a woman with an oval face, large, well-opened eyes, an intense stare and guarded expression, reminiscent of the Fayum paintings of neighbouring Egypt. Her face has an ageless quality - she certainly does not look like the woman of sixty which the accompanying inscription claims her to be. It clearly depicts a woman of local élite status, firstly in the care which has been lavished on the portrait itself (particularly compared to the lack of care taken with the fresco work of a second niche in the tomb), secondly in the stateliness of her dress and her jewels, and lastly by the fact that Aelia carries a *volumen* in her left hand. The last feature proclaims her to be a woman of education - for male portraits a scroll in the hand would betoken their élite status, since only this group would be able to aspire to an education, and possibly by extension, high office.<sup>75</sup> The connotations of education and élite status also applied to women, although high office was an association that remained limited to men in these provinces.<sup>76</sup>

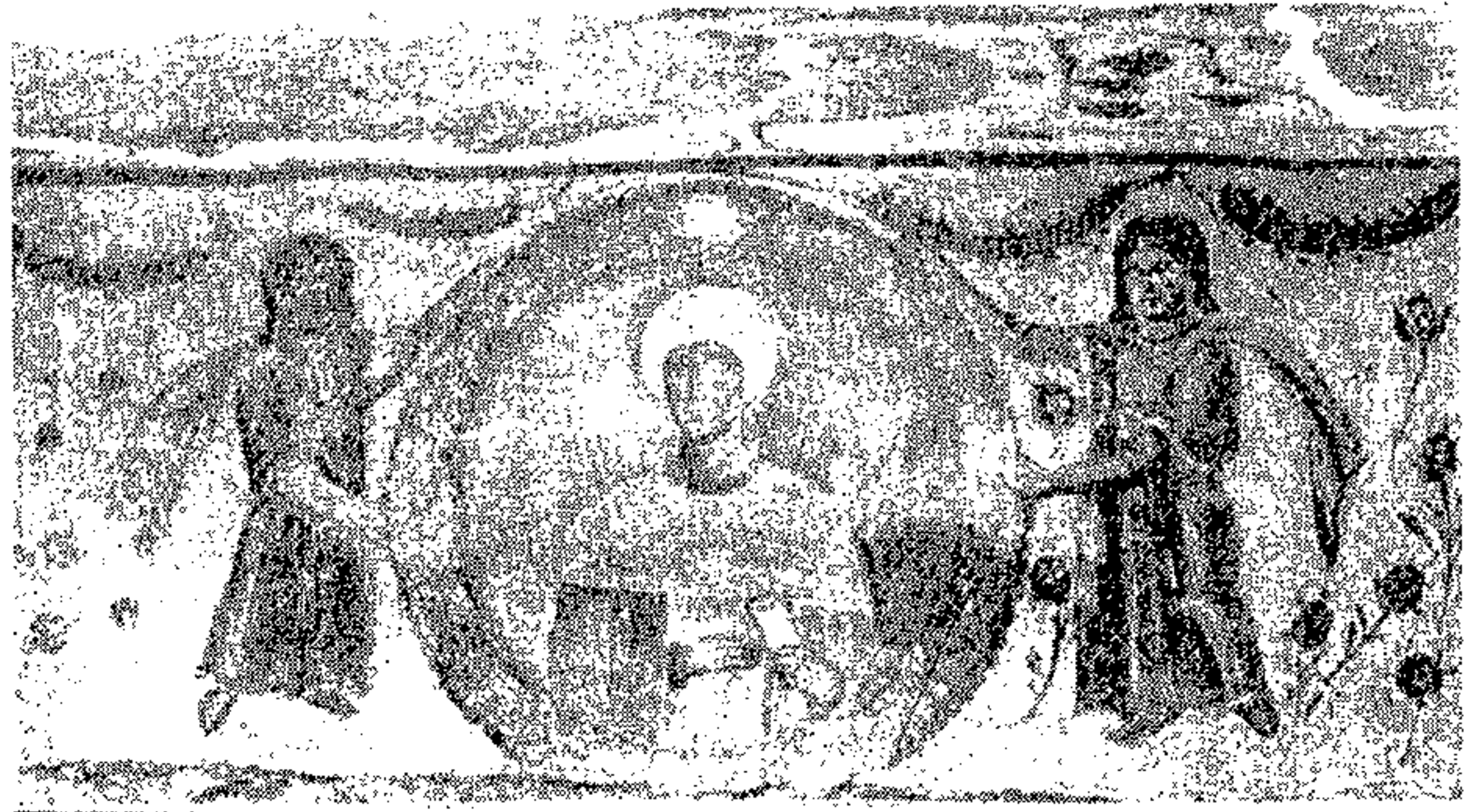


FIGURE 4.3 TOMB FRESCO OF AELIA ARISUTH HOLDING A PAPYRUS ROLL - 4<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY

The accompanying niche in the Gargàresch tomb is dedicated to her husband, Aelius Ma[gнус or -ximus], son of Iurathanus. The name Iurathanus is Libyan, and also occurs in an inscription from neighbouring Sabratha

<sup>73</sup> In Byzantine iconography a scroll can also denote an individual's connections to or application of the law of the land, but since the fresco is dated to the 4<sup>th</sup> century and Aelia Arisuth is not connected as far as we know to any form of governance we can safely exclude this possibility.

<sup>74</sup> Arishat [IRT<sup>c</sup> 12]; Arisu [IRT<sup>c</sup> 754, 855]; Arisuth [IRT<sup>c</sup> 239, 850]; Arishat [IRT<sup>c</sup> 29]; Arrisut [IRT<sup>c</sup> 754]. A Phoenician example can be found in 'Arisata' in the CIS I.I. 228.

<sup>75</sup> In the case where the man holding the scroll or tablets is part of the married couple, these items could represent the man's control over the woman's dowry, where the scroll would represent the marriage contract, for example as illustrated in the 2<sup>nd</sup> (Arlon) and 3<sup>rd</sup> (Portogruaro) century scenes in ROUCHE (1992): 'Myths and mysteries', 46.

<sup>76</sup> Two famous Pompeian wall paintings of women with the accoutrements of learning can be viewed in PAUL-ZINSERLING (1972): *Die Frau in Hellas und Rom*, 93 and 96). Both are rather more reminiscent of Ovid's views on women's education, that a little learning gives a woman allure [Ars Amat. 3]. These ladies of culture in attending to their own fulfilment and achievements of course were contrary to the Roman ideal of the *matrona* devoted to husband and family. Too much learning for a woman was hardly encouraged in the Roman world [Juv., Sat. 6.451-456].



in connection with the building of a *labrum* in the late 1<sup>st</sup> or early 2<sup>nd</sup> century. No offices are listed for the benefactor – probably he was acting as a private citizen. Aelius Magnus is depicted in the fresco reclining under a tree in a typical posture of *otium* (see Figure 11.2). This would seem to be a complete reversal of the traditional male-female portraiture of Late Antiquity, where it is the woman who is represented at leisure as an attestation to her husband's success and wealth. Aelia is clearly the more prominent partner here, occupying the role of learning and exhibition of wealth usually associated with men, where Aelius is indolently enjoying the fruits of this wealth, a role often attributed to women.

Two other figures, male and female, in tomb mosaics from the Chapel of the Martyrs have also each been depicted holding a volumen or scroll (Alexander 1987: 9).<sup>77</sup> Even though they are the only figures not in the pose of the orant, it is unlikely that they are not Christian.<sup>78</sup> The importance of education for both men and women in a Christian context has already been mentioned. In the early Church many ascribed to the opinion of Jerome, for whom education was essential for the serious spiritual pilgrim (Hickey 1987: 98). Several examples from across the early Christian Roman Empire collected in Laurent (1956: for example plates 17, 25, 27) create the impression that it is Biblical learning which is being portrayed. All these illustrations (reliefs on sarcophagi and frescos) are of men, or men reading to women, and illustrations from later centuries (6<sup>th</sup> to 10<sup>th</sup>) display the book form rather than the scroll.<sup>79</sup>

### Evidence of a lack of female education in Africa

Some scholars express their scepticism that education for women of advantaged status could have been of a high standard since they were situated in Africa.<sup>80</sup> Indeed there is some evidence that could contradict the assumption of a generally high education of women of the urban élite. The visit of Septimia Octavilla, Septimius Severus' sister from Lepcis Magna to Rome apparently caused the emperor no little embarrassment:

*cum soror sua Leptitana ad eum venisset vix Latine loquens, ac de illa multum imperator erubesceret, dato filio eius lato clavo atque ipsi multis muneribus redire mulierem in patriam praecepit et quidem cum filio, qui brevi vita defunctus est.*

His sister from Leptis once came to see him, and, since she could scarcely speak Latin, made the emperor blush hotly for her. And so, after giving the broad stripe to her son and many presents to the woman herself, he sent her home again, and also her son, who died a short time afterwards. [SHA: Sept. Sev. 15.7]

The emperor himself, we are told by Spartianus, was *in prima pueritia, priusquam Latinis Graecisque imbueretur, quibus eruditissimus fuit* ('while still a child and before he had been drilled in the Latin and Greek literatures, with which he was very well acquainted...') [SHA: Sept. Sev. 1.4],<sup>81</sup> but spoke with a native accent till late in life ( ... *canorus voce, sed Afrum quiddam usque ad senectutem sonans* [SHA: Sept. Sev. 19.9-10]).<sup>82</sup>

<sup>77</sup> The figures are listed as 1049q and 942 in P. GAUCKLER (1910): *Inventaire de la Gaule et de l'Afrique, II, Afrique proconsulaire (Tunisie)*, Paris. Supplement by Merlin (1915), Paris (reference in Alexander (1987: 2 n.1), unfortunately without illustration).

<sup>78</sup> Although combinations of Christians and pagans in one tomb are not unknown. See for example DUNBABIN (1978): *Mosaics of Roman North Africa*, 138.

<sup>79</sup> The *codex*, the ancient book form was known in Africa and is mentioned for example in the late 3<sup>rd</sup> century text by Arnobius [*Adv. Nat.* 2.23].

<sup>80</sup> For example HEMELRIJK (1999): *Matrona docta*, 27: 'and a surprisingly outstanding education (considering her domicile) is evident in the case of Aemilia Pudentilla....'.

<sup>81</sup> Also Aurelius Victor [20.28]: *ortus medie humili, primo litteris, dehinc imbutus foro* (born into a fairly humble station, Severus was schooled first in letters, then in law).

<sup>82</sup> BIRLEY (1988<sup>2</sup>): *Septimius Severus*, 35 and 42, plausibly argues on the likelihood of Severus' African accent, since his grandfather



Here we have two individuals from a social level which ought to bespeak of a good education, who appear at first glance not to have been that well educated, at least by standards held in Rome for the élite classes there.<sup>83</sup> This provincialism is usually attributed to the fact that they came from the originally Punic town of Lepcis Magna, which was still heavily Punic in Severus' day. Birley (1988<sup>2</sup>: 132) points out that it is also possible that Octavilla's husband was a Greek speaker (for which there is absolutely no evidence whatsoever) and that her poor Latin was due not so much to a lack of education as to lack of practice. But the emperor would surely not have been ashamed of a sister conversant in Greek, even if her Latin had been poor. A mastery of Greek, as in the case of Pudentilla mentioned above, actually enhanced status. The veracity of the *Scriptores Historiae Augustae* is generally considered to be rather dubious however, and information contained in the lives of the emperors is not of the most reliable.

Although criticism of Octavilla's lack of Latin would imply that for the women of the élite the ability to converse in Latin seems to have been desirable, this may have been more important in Rome than in North Africa. A certain prejudice against provincials is evidenced elsewhere.<sup>84</sup> But generally it would appear that education for Roman African women was a social asset in the sense mentioned by Cornelius Nepos a woman you could take to dinner and could keep up a conversation at table.<sup>85</sup> This does not, of course, prove that all women of the urban élite were able to do so, but only that they were not discouraged from attaining this attribute. We may perhaps infer something from the education of Julia Domna, the second wife of Septimius Severus, who in adult life studied rhetoric and philosophy [Dio 76.7], since it is an indication as to this African emperor's attitude to education in women. His intolerance of his sister's lack of accomplishments makes his acceptance of his wife's pursuit of learning entirely plausible. However, the emperor may also have been influenced by more liberal attitudes to imperial women in Rome in the later Empire, and this is not necessarily a general attitude of Africans, even though they may have 'worshipped education' (Brown 1967: 24).

Although literary creativity appears to have flourished at the Vandal court two centuries later, it would not appear, on the slight evidence that we have, that women benefited from this particularly. In fact, on this point we may compare the information given by Luxorius (in his poem honouring the nuptials of the Goth Fridus [91.32-33]) to that imparted by Claudian about half a century earlier. Claudian's *epithalamium* on Honorius' wedding included eight lines of praise of the bride's love of reading and learning. He portrays her poring over the writers of Greece and Rome under her mother's guidance [*Epithal. de Nupt. Hon. Aug.* 229-237]. By contrast Luxorius' only comment on the bride for Fridus is that she is pleasing in appearance and that she comes from a family of standing suited to that of the groom.

Thus throughout the period under discussion there is evidence both for and against female education. African

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before him had been complimented by Statius on *not* having an accent - and he had been brought up in Italy. Birley also deduces some of the peculiarities of the African accent from references in other Classical writers (1988<sup>2</sup>: 35). A more cautious approach to an 'African accent' is taken by MILLAR (1968): 'Local cultures in the Roman Empire: Libyan, Punic and Latin in Roman Africa'. The fact that Septimius and his sister were of Punic descent as distinct from generally African may also have been potentially embarrassing for its ancient associations with Hannibal (Birley 1988<sup>2</sup>: 19).

<sup>83</sup> Even if the father of Septimius and his sister had not been interested in providing opportunities for learning for his children, the new generation may have had a different attitude, see p. 71 n. 61.

<sup>84</sup> The poet Florus, who held public readings of his work in Carthage, was denied a literary prize in Rome when the emperor withheld it on the grounds that the prize should be awarded to a Roman.

<sup>85</sup> See above p. 5.

authors pay no attention to the education of women (unless it reflects positively on themselves in their role as mentor or serves some other useful purpose), but there is evidence for some women being educated to a fairly high level. On the other hand, education for women in Roman Africa was clearly influenced by individual circumstances such as status, local traditions and other cultures which gained ascendancy. While even during the Roman period the number of examples indicate that female education was the exception rather than the rule, as such it does not compare poorly with the evidence collected by Hemelrijk (1999) for the incidence of women's education in the Roman context (although admittedly this work deals only with the late Republic and early empire).

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## CHAPTER 5

# LOVE, DESIRE AND LAW: RELATIONSHIPS OUTSIDE MARRIAGE

While in Chapter 6 much attention will be paid to the motivations for marriage among the propertied classes, other groups denied this status had alternative arrangements for which the impetus or incentive was more varied. Since normally these relationships were not a means of gaining status (as opposed to legitimate marriage) we have less evidence for these arrangements, although such testimony as we do have throws some interesting light on the attitudes and priorities of these status groups.

### COMMON LAW MARRIAGES AND CONCUBINES

Until the 4<sup>th</sup> century common law marriages were perfectly respectable but were usually arranged because one or both partners were ineligible for marriage, either because of their status or because of other conditions such as military service. Rawson (1974: 280) alerts us to the fact that it is our modern inclination which makes us doubt the respectability of such informal arrangements. On tombstones in Rome such unofficial relationships even subscribed to the *concordia* of legal marriages.<sup>1</sup> A *tumulis amoris* was erected for a concubine.

SÉTIF (SITIFIS)

[CIL 8532]

TUMULIS | AMORIS | ARRAE DATIVAE | CONCUBINAE C(ARISSIMAE) | SIMPLIC(ISSIMAE) V(IXIT) A(NNIS) XXIII  
| H(IC) S(ITA) E(ST)

A grave to love. For Arria Dativa, a concubine most dear and guileless, who lived 23 years. Here she rests.

Arria Dativa's lover may have decided to remain anonymous, but the dedicator in another inscription [CIL 8100] felt no such inhibitions in commemorating the death of his *concubina* Cominia Luc[iosa] and signing himself as [...]nius Sossannu[us]. While a concubine may not necessarily have given her commemorator partner reflected glory from her attributes (for example the status of her family, or her wealth), their relationship did not detract from his status. But a man's concubine and their children did not share his social status and he had to make a will if he wanted his children to inherit his estate.

<sup>1</sup> For example as at CIL 6.9499. For a discussion of this aspect see TREGGIARI (1981b): 'Contubernales in CIL 6'.

One of the difficulties of studying Roman marriages is determining whether or not these were formal, apart from the small collection where an informal arrangement is indicated (by the use of words like *concubina*, *contubernalis*, *amica/-us*).<sup>2</sup> Rawson argues for quite a high percentage of *de facto* marriages for Rome itself, since 'from at least the late Republic onwards, marriage at Rome was not usually based on any intrinsic ceremony: it consisted essentially of cohabitation between two eligible partners, and the wife did not come under her husband's formal authority' (Rawson 1974: 280). These conditions facilitated informal arrangements. Liasons with non-citizen women must have been common, but evidence for such arrangements are naturally underrepresented in the evidence. We find no evidence on Roman tombstones of polygamy, for example, even though it is likely that this African custom must have prevailed in some instances, particularly among un-Romanized groups. Such individuals, however, would be less likely to adopt the Roman practice of erecting a tombstone and providing evidence of the practice.

Our literary sources for Africa tend to place some emphasis on ceremony and tradition, for example the marriage of Apuleius and Pudentilla, or the rituals described in the *Metamorphoses* (see Chapter 6), but clearly these examples both apply to the local élites where ceremony was part of status. But the absence of ceremony that made a marriage 'informal' is not as significant as the lack of contract or dowry, such as those described in the *Apologia* and the *Metamorphoses*, but of course in epigraphy this information is usually not made available.

We know that Augustine entered upon such a common law marriage with a concubine. The relationship lasted over ten years and they had one son, Adeodatus [*Conf.* 2.2.3 and 4.2.3]. Such relationships were taken up by men who could not or had no wish to marry, at least not yet, and would perhaps, like Augustine, try to make an advantageous match later in life. The woman in such cases might be perfectly respectable (her family might be too poor to dower her, for example) but in the case of Augustine's concubine her low status is implied in the fact that in all his writings Augustine never mentions her by name.<sup>3</sup> In view of Augustine's palpable lack of enthusiasm for marriage - in his writings when he speaks for example of being 'fettered to a wife' [*Conf.* 2.3.8] - it is perhaps not surprising that he never married. While in Italy Augustine attempted to make a marriage alliance advantageous to his career and his concubine was sent back to Africa [*Conf.* 6.15.25]. This was no unusual thing, and according to Ambrose, Augustine's mentor in Milan, for Christians justified in Biblical text:

'Abraham had been wise to cast off his low born concubine - did they want marriage beneath their class, children to whom they could not pass on their land, their noble wives snubbed by serving maids?'

[*De Abr.* 1.2.19 and 1.4.26]<sup>4</sup>

Augustine, however, rapidly found a substitute since his affianced bride was only 10 and too young to consummate a marriage [*Conf.* 6.13-15]. Later Augustine was to express the view that such informal relationships with women who would be dismissed if the man were to take a wife were wrong [*Serm.* 312.2; *De Bono Coniug.* 5], but it is to be doubted whether Augustine's contemporaries saw his point, since double morality had for centuries been supported by custom and law:

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<sup>2</sup> *Concubina* - CIL 8532, 9100, 16140. *Contubernales*, women, CIL 1044, 1877, 23504 against 11 citations for men. *Conse(r)vi* - CIL 21303.

<sup>3</sup> Although it is possible that conditions may have been different in Africa, RAWSON (1974): 'Roman concubinage and other *de facto* marriages', 289, notes that for Rome itself no freeborn women are recorded as concubines, and it therefore seems unlikely, considering all the evidence, that Augustine's concubine was freeborn.

<sup>4</sup> = *Patrologiae Cursus Completus*, Series Latina vol. 14, columns 427 and 431-2.



*Si illa te unum, tu quare duas? Sed dicis: Ancilla mea concubina mea est, numquid ad uxorem alienam vado? Numquid ad meretricem publicam vade? An non lidet mihi in domo mea facere quod volo?*

Your wife has just one man - why do you want two women? You reply, My slave woman is my concubine. Would you rather I seduced another man's wife, or ran to a public prostitute? Can't I do what I like in my own house?

[Aug., *Serm.* 224.3]

In fact it is the laws against adulterous wives which became even more severe during the Christian era [for example *Cod. Theod.* 3.16.1]. Roman traditions were not averse to a *ménage à trois* (Rawson 1974: 287) before the laws of Justinian,<sup>5</sup> but it is possible that at least the higher status groups in Africa made some attempt to distance themselves from African polygamous customs in their efforts to appear Romanized. Salvian in the 5<sup>th</sup> century (bearing in mind that he had nothing positive to say about Rome or Africa) saw concubinage as immoral especially when men had legal marriages:

*nam de concubinis quippiam dici forsitan etiam iniustum esse videatur, quia hoc in comparatione supradictorum flagitiorum quasi genus est castitatis, uxoribus paucis esse contentum et intra certum coniugum numerum frenum libidinum continere. Coniugum dixi, quia ad tantam res impudentiam venit, ut ancillas suas multi uxores putent. Atque utinam sicut putantur esse quasi coniuges, ita solae haberentur uxores. Illud magis taetrum ac detestabile, quod quidam matrimonia honorata sortiti alias sibi rursum servilis status coniuges sumunt, deformantes sancti conubii honorem per degeneris contubernii vilitatem.*

It seems unjust to speak of concubines because, in comparison with the aforementioned vices, it is a kind of chastity to be content with a few consorts and to put a bridle on lust by limiting themselves to a certain number of wives. I say 'wives' because the affair has reached such shamelessness that many consider their maid servants their wives. Would that they had only those consorts who are looked upon as wives! But, what is more loathsome and abominable, certain men who have contracted honourable marriages take additional wives of servile status, thereby debasing the dignity of marriage by the debasement of degenerate cohabitation. [De *Gub. Dei*, 4.5; my emphases]

But concubinage clearly remained a fact of life, attested in the 5<sup>th</sup> century by a poem by Luxorius entitled *De causidico turpi qui concubam suam Charitem vocabat* (About an infamous lawyer who called his concubine Grace) [*Epigr.* 54]. The tone and language of the poem make it quite clear that the relationship is an overtly sexual one - to attribute such a poem to a husband and wife relationship would have been an anomaly in Roman society, even for Luxorius.

## SLAVE RELATIONSHIPS

Enslavement was the lot of women where wars were fought, and one that must have befallen a number of women in Africa from the sack of Carthage in 146 BC to the conquest of Belisarius in the 6<sup>th</sup> century AD.<sup>6</sup> In the campaigns of Belisarius alone we are regularly informed of this course of events: when the Mauri killed the Roman African men, they enslaved their wives and children; Belisarius himself had the Vandal women who had married Roman soldiers dispersed into slavery, while Solomon in his turn in successive battles killed the Mauri men and enslaved their women and children [*Procop.*, *De Bell. Vand.* 4.8.22; 4.14.9; 4.11.56; 4.21.14]. We do not possess a great deal of information about slaves in the African provinces, and most of our evidence comes from inscriptions, which is in itself problematical since it is often difficult to distinguish slaves from *liberti*.

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<sup>5</sup> According to this law a man could be divorced for persistently and despite warnings staying with another woman in the same city, which counted as the equivalent of having a concubine, which was not permitted [*Nov. Iust.* 117.8-9].

<sup>6</sup> The origin of slaves in Africa is discussed by LASSÈRE (1977): *Ubique populus*, 428-429: local wars, but also from Greece and the East if onomastic studies can be taken as an indication, which is in itself debatable. An individual case is related by Theodoret of Cyrrhus [*Ep.* 70]: Maria, the daughter of the governor Eudaimon, was enslaved when the Vandals seized Africa and sold by them to inhabitants of Cyprus together with her own slave girl. Her plight became known to some soldiers stationed nearby, who paid for her freedom. Theodoret entrusted the girl to the deacons, and after ten months she returned to her father.



Mosaics, mostly dating to the 4<sup>th</sup> century, sometimes depict rural farm scenes with native Africans - dark skinned<sup>7</sup> and dressed in loin cloths (Figure 9.9), while the women are lighter-skinned and fully dressed, for example in the mosaic from Zliten (Figure 9.8). Whether these are *coloni*, slaves or migrant workers is impossible to tell, which leaves us with the same difficulty of interpretation as inscriptions. Rural slaves are the least attested in the sources, while more is known about domestic and especially imperial slaves.<sup>8</sup> Several inscriptions such as *AE* 1980, 967 (Caesarea) attest to the presence of imperial slaves/freedwomen and their descendants in Africa.

Before the 3<sup>rd</sup> century AD marriage for slaves had been forbidden. Unofficial slave unions were common, however, but they were without obligations and rights, and references to *coniunx* or *uxor* have no legal meaning in contexts where both partners were clearly still slaves.<sup>9</sup> In one inscription a slave even refers to his partner Thyas as *sponsa* [*CIL* 12925]. In another case we are told that the slave woman Daphnis conceived a child against the wishes of her master. The father was probably Hermes, her fellow slave, who commemorates her death in childbirth:

CARTHAGE

[*CIL* 24734; *CLE* 2115; *ILT* 987]

DAPHNIS EGO HERMITIS CONIUNX SUM LIBERA FACTA | CUM DOMINUS VELLE PRIMU(S) HERMES LIBER UT ESSET | FATO EGO FACTA PRIOR, FATO EGO RAPTA PRIOR | QUAE TULI QUOD GEMUI, GEMITUS VIRO SAEPE RELIQUI | QUAE DOMINO INVITO VITAM DEDI PROXIME NATO | NUNC QUIS ALET NATUM QUIS VITAE LONGA MINISTRAT | ME STYGA QUOD RAPUIT TAM CITO ENI(M) A SUPERIS. | PIA VIXIT ANNIS XXV H(IC) S(ITA) E(ST) I, Daphnis, wife of Hermes, I have been freed. The master wanted firstly to free Hermes, but destiny decided that I should be freed first, that I should be taken first. I who have born great suffering, have left my groans to my husband, tears he will often shed. I who despite the order of our master, had recently given birth to a child. And who is going to feed the child now, who [will] patiently look after its life, for the Styx snatched me so quickly from the land of the living. She lived a virtuous life of 25 years. Here she rests.

Lassère (1973: 141) dates the inscription to the middle of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century AD, thus before the legalization of slave unions. As recognised by Roman law, slave children were the property of the slaves' owner. In another instance the slave girl and martyr Felicitas, eight months pregnant when she was arrested together with Perpetua and her group, would not have been executed together with her companions had her child not been born prematurely, since her child belonged to Felicitas' owner, and while she was pregnant the law [*Dig.* 48.19.3] forbade her execution for this and not for any humanitarian reason. Sometimes more humane attitudes attest to continued relationships between mother and child: Benedicta was born a slave in the *domus Caesaris* and her mother Aelia, a freedwoman, commemorates her death [*AE* 1980, 967 (Caesarea)]. It is possible that infant children born of slave unions had closer relationships with their mothers than with their fathers, if the mother survived the birth, but such ties of blood were not necessarily respected in antiquity. A slave freed by his master sometimes purchased his wife (or even his children) from the same master who had freed him, for example in the case of Onesimus and Anthia, freedman and -woman of Metra, procurator of Augustus [*AE* 1938, 41; *ILT* 142], or Aelius Victor (freed by Hadrian) and Aelia Magna [*CIL* 8996].

<sup>7</sup> On skin colour in Graeco-Roman iconography see the discussion on pp. 96 n.19 and p. 150. Traditionally women were depicted as lighter skinned than men.

<sup>8</sup> Rural slavery in Africa was gradually replaced by *coloni* - some time after the 400 slaves attested in the *Apologia* [93.4] in the second century. LASSÈRE (1977): *Ubique populus*, 427, refers to the rural village of Celtianis where among 1271 epitaphs references to slaves and freedpersons are very rare, although, as he points out, slaves of such humble status are less likely to be commemorated.

<sup>9</sup> In *CIL* 12792 (*ILT* 906) Minicia Prima is the 'wife' of an imperial slave: *Nicodromus, Aug(usti servus) piae et bene merenti coniugi fecit*. Dated by Lassère to the 2<sup>nd</sup> century AD (1973: 138).



Unions between slaves and freeborn<sup>10</sup> were frowned upon if the woman was free and the man a slave, but Tertullian urges Christian women to marry Christian men of lower status rather than marry a pagan of their own rank by using this unflattering example of pagan women:

*Pleraque et genere nobiles et re beatae passim ignobilibus et mediocribus simul coniunguntur aut ad luxuriam inventis aut ad licentiam sec<ta>tis. Nonnullae se libere et servis suis conferunt, omnium hominum existimatione despecta, dummodo habeant a quibus nullum impedimentum libertatis suae timeant.*

Many women, noble in birth and fortunate in wealth, join themselves indiscriminately to ignoble and humble men, who have been chosen for pleasure or castrated for lust. Some women bring themselves freely even to their own slaves, in contempt of everyone's opinion, as long as they have men from whom they fear no impediment to their freedom. [Ad Uxor. 2.8.4]

The reference to the 'impediment to their freedom' may refer, says Evans-Grubbs (1993: 133), to the *senatusconsultum Claudianum*, which Tertullian quotes earlier in the same passage [2.8.1], by which the free woman living with a slave also become the property of the slave's owner,<sup>11</sup> and ca. 326 Constantine issued a law which prescribed the death penalty for this offence. Presumably this was less easily detectable if the woman resided with a slave she owned herself.

No similar restriction existed for freeborn men regarding enslaved women, as indicated by the conversation related in one of Augustine's sermons quoted above. The dalliance of Lucius with the slave girl Photis in Book 2 of the *Metamorphoses*, while somewhat romanticized, was probably not untypical behaviour of free men towards slave women. As can be seen from the writings of Augustine, it was a man's right to have sexual access to the females in his household, even if he were already legally married [*Serm.* 153.5 & 224.3]. But while freedom of choice was not an option such women could exercise, many may have sought advantages from this type of relationship. Epitaphs erected by freeborn individuals commemorating the death of slaves implies some fondness for, if not necessarily a relationship with, the deceased. One epitaph attests to an otherwise unspecified relationship between Titus Valerius Felix and a Libyan slave girl, Eclene, who died at the age of 23 [*AE* 1985, 907], and another [*CIL* 12979] tells how the *vernacula* Castula loved her master, who erected the epitaph for her. This does not expressly mean a physical relationship. There were in all likelihood what Ladjimi-Sebaï (1977: 361) calls 'véritables relations amicales, de l'affection même qui pouvait exister entre les maîtres et les domestiques, surtout, et nous pouvons le supposer, dans les maisons où les esclaves n'étaient pas trop nombreux'. Even Milo in the *Metamorphoses* expresses some interest in the welfare of Lucius' slaves [1.26].

Senatorial men were forbidden to marry freedwomen by Augustan law, but apart from this group there are many examples in which slave women were freed by their masters for the purpose of a legal marriage. An inscription from Simitthus testifies that Marcus Hostilius Reginus (clearly advertised as a citizen by his parentage and tribe) erected a gravestone for *lib(ertae) atque uxori*, Hostilia Asclepias. The same wording is used to describe Caecilia Cinit(h)ia, the wife of Caecilius F[or]tunatus [*CIL* 27869; *ILAlg* I 3199]. It is of course possible that these women were already *liberta* when they met their prospective husbands and that they adopted their *gentilia*. Nevertheless, in either case it was a process of upward mobility, which may have affected their own desire to

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<sup>10</sup> Relationships between freeborn, freed and enslaved from the beginning of the Empire to the laws of Justinian are treated in detail by EVANS-GRUBBS (1993): 'Marriage more shameful than adultery'.

<sup>11</sup> The *Cod. Theod.* [4.12.1] which forced such women to take the status of their 'husbands' does not in fact refer to all free women but specifically to those of the *honestiores* (Nathan 2000: 59). In this sense, as Nathan points out, Constantine's laws were in effect an extension of the laws of Augustus which forbade marriages between senatorial families and *infames*.



appear Romanized for example in portraiture or in the adoption of Roman names.<sup>12</sup>

### **THE *LEGIO III AUGUSTA***

Roman Africa had its own legion, the *III Augusta*, stationed first at Ammaedara under Augustus, at Theveste under the Flavians, at finally at Lambaesis under Trajan. The legion was made up of Roman citizens, while non-citizens (including for example Spaniards and Gauls) served in the auxiliary units which often became permanent garrisons in the African provinces.<sup>13</sup> A career in the army appealed to those who were landless or who had poor prospects by offering opportunities for citizenship and increased status. At a rough estimate the soldiers and auxiliaries represented about 0,25 % of the population in the African provinces.<sup>14</sup>

Soldiers up to centurionate level were not permitted to contract legal marriages, since theoretically such attachments provided distracting loyalties and encumbrances, and would make the army less mobile (Dixon 1992: 55). In reality, however, many soldiers contracted common law marriages with local women (Broughton 1929: 137; Watson 1969: 135). The children of soldiers by indigenous women were initially considered illegitimate and received the mother's status by the *ius naturale*.<sup>15</sup> Unofficial relationships could be made legal on the soldier's discharge, if by special privilege he was granted the right of *iustae nuptiae* or *conubium* ('right of intermarriage') with a woman who did not have citizenship. Discharged auxiliary soldiers received Roman citizenship and *conubium* where applicable. From the reign of Claudius to AD 139 the grant of citizenship to veterans was also conferred upon the children, male and female, born to them while in service. This may well be how individuals such as Iulia Extricata and Iulia Tsala at Lamasba, about 40 kilometres northwest of Lambaesis [*CIL* 18592 = 4450; 18624 = 4455] gained their citizenship (Shaw 1982a: 69). The 'wives' of such veterans were not, however, given citizenship (Cherry 1998: 104), probably because this was regarded as immaterial once the children of such unions had already received this. Veterans appear to have had a certain status in the provincial towns (due to what was often 'unexplained wealth' (MacMullen 1963: 105), i.e. plunder), and were sought after as magistrates, patrons and as husbands. After 139 sons born before their father's right to citizenship had to serve twenty years in the legion or twenty-five in an auxiliary unit,<sup>16</sup> while the effect for daughters was that there must have been fewer women around who had citizenship and were of marriageable age.<sup>17</sup> This was probably intended to encourage auxiliary recruitment rather than to discourage soldiers from forming relationships with women who were not Roman citizens, since veterans were still given the right to contract marriages with non-Roman women (Cherry 1998: 105). These provisions imply that the

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<sup>12</sup> The laws regarding the provisions for slave families are briefly reviewed by DIXON (1992a): *The Roman family*, 53-55.

<sup>13</sup> The majority of auxiliary soldiers, according to CHERRY'S study: *Frontier and society in Roman North Africa* (1998), 95, were not of African origin.

<sup>14</sup> The total population of the Roman African provinces is given by Cherry (1998: 95) as 6 to 8 million (or 6 to 7 million by Raven (1984: 88-89), 8 million by Duncan-Jones (1963a: 170)). The African legion had about 5 000 to 6 000 men (Mahjoubi *et al* 1981: 468; Cherry 1998: 40) and about 10 000 - 15 000 auxiliaries (Cherry 1998: 40). A number of veteran colonies were also established, for example 11 by Octavian in Mauretania, and most of the 35 colonies distributed by Marcus Aurelius were veteran settlements. In addition Shaw (1983: 139) calculates that the legion would have yielded approximately 650 veterans every two years.

<sup>15</sup> An exception occurred in Roman Spain in 171 BC when the Senate granted Latin rights to about 4 000 children of unions between Roman soldiers and Spanish women and they were settled in a colony at Carteia.

<sup>16</sup> Livy 43.3.2-4; See also SHERWIN WHITE (1973<sup>2</sup>): *The Roman citizenship*, 248, 273-4.

<sup>17</sup> WATSON (1969): *The Roman Soldier*, 136, deduces from this that the chief beneficiaries of the *Constitutio Anoniniana* were women.



authorities did expect at least some soldiers to form unions with non-Roman women. On the basis of the inscriptions studied by Cherry for the Algerian frontier zone, however, it appears that incidences of marriage between soldiers/veterans and indigenous women were negligible. Intermarriage appears to have been more common in civilian settlements such as Thubursicu Numidarum (Cherry 1998: 100-140). The legalization of soldiers' marriages by Septimius Severus<sup>18</sup> and the granting of citizenship to all freeborn persons in the Empire by Caracalla disposed of these problems. A legal marriage for a soldier now meant that his sons could join the legion, and his daughters could legally marry.

By the end of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century AD nearly all the soldiers serving in the Roman legion stationed at Lambaesis were locally recruited, and in many of these cases inscriptions point to service in the legion becoming a family occupation which passed from father to son (Mann 1983: 13-15). As many as 35% of inscriptions from Theveste and Lambaesis give their *patria* as *castris*, meaning that they were born in camp. For many others the *patria* is a *vicus* or civil settlement near the fort. In one example Mann (1983: 19) records the two late second century marriages of Flavia Flaccila, firstly to a decurion at Lambaesis, C. Iulius Saturninus [*CIL* 2923], with whom she had one son, Longinianus [*CIL* 2905]. Her second husband was C. Pomponius Maximus, a *cornicularius* [*CIL* 2962] who followed a political career at Lambaesis [*CIL* 18225] after his discharge. Her son from her first marriage also entered the legion and became a centurion [*CIL* 18072], and married a Roman citizen and native of Lambaesis, Processa, whose mother, Bonitta, was also buried at Lambaesis [*CIL* 2906].<sup>19</sup> Like Bonitta and Processa, many of the women whom soldiers married were also soldiers' daughters (Shaw 1983: 148; Cherry 1998: 133)). For others, marriage to soldiers was a form of upward mobility (Decret and Fantar 1981: 226). Some of these women may have been former slaves or concubines, unofficially married to their soldier masters in the camps (MacMullen 1963: 106), as in the case of two examples from Theveste of slave women who married their former owners [*CIL* 1925; 27869].<sup>20</sup>

By all accounts the minimal role of the army in Romanizing the African provinces (Broughton 1968<sup>2</sup>; Bénabou 1976a; Cherry 1998) can be ascribed to the fact that, besides their limited numbers compared to other provinces, they formed a separate community which brought little change to the region as a whole, even over several centuries. The economic life of the region where the legion was stationed may have become linked with the needs of the army, for example the necessity of supplying the army and payment for goods,<sup>21</sup> but socially there are indications that such a military settlement became a 'total institution' and those who belonged to it passed out of normal society into a lifestyle which totally absorbed them (Shaw 1983: 144).<sup>22</sup> MacMullen (1990: 226)

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<sup>18</sup> Severus probably allowed his indebtedness to the army to influence him to pass a law whereby soldiers of 25 years' service were permitted to marry and to live with their wives. The date of 197 is supported by Herodian [3.8.4] but higher officers could marry and live with their wives before this date (MacMullen 1963: 126 n.20). See also CAMPBELL (1978): 'The marriage of soldiers under the Empire' for the collection of legal texts supporting Herodian's statement, and, opposing Septimius Severus as the author of this legislation, GARNSEY (1970b): 'Septimius Severus and the marriage of soldiers'.

<sup>19</sup> Such a 'closed' society was of course not peculiar to army settlements and veteran colonies. It was a regular feature of small communities - witness for example the rallying of the Sicinii family when Pudentilla marries an outsider, Apuleius.

<sup>20</sup> See also MARSHALL (1975): 'Roman women and the provinces', 117.

<sup>21</sup> Thus MACMULLEN (1968): 'Rural Romanization', 338, on the North Western provinces of the Empire: '... tents of booths, then wine shops and cabarets. With wine came women and quasi-legal marriages, and in due course, little recruits. Needs of military duties or comfort, of utensils, clothing and provisions of very kind had to be supplied by still other persons.' On the effect of the army on the local populations, see FENTRESS (1979): 'Numidia and the Roman army' ; LE BOHEC (1989): *La troisième légion auguste*.

<sup>22</sup> Although Herodian [7.9.5] describes the placid activities of the young men of Carthage, 'completely divorced from weapons and



refers to the 'ample epigraphic record of legions forming blocks in the population of *coloniae*'. Even veteran colonies were inclined this way:<sup>23</sup> Tacitus relates how across the Empire 'whole legions were settled in the colonies with their tribunes and centurions and men each in his own rank, so as to create a state through their harmony and mutual affection' [*Ann.* 14.27.3]. Cherry (1998: 69) notes that later veteran colonies would hardly have served as centres of Romanization, as most of the veterans would have been of provincial origin. Soldiers born *in castris* also tended to remain with the *III Augusta*, whereas those born in the African cities are sometimes found in other legions across the Empire (Shaw 1983: 144). Cherry has tabulated the rest of the available evidence for the origin of soldiers of the *III Augusta* (1998: 94). According to this most of the recruits of African origin (apart from those born *in castris*) were from the large centres like Carthage, or from former military towns like Ammaedara or Theveste, who were likely to have been Romanized already. There is not one example of a soldier recruited from the frontier zone before AD 235. Of those of provincial origin, therefore, only a very small percentage is likely to have been drawn from the indigenous population (Cherry 1998: 93).

The rebellion of Gordianus and the aristocratic landowners who revolted against the central government in AD 238<sup>24</sup> highlights what Shaw (1983: 148) sees as an 'inward-looking ethos' of the soldier society at Lambaesis in their total loyalty to their commanding officers. Despite their provincial ancestry, the loyalty of the soldiers lay within their own legion rather than to their fellow Africans in the broader sense. The *III Augusta* was subsequently disbanded by Gordian III in AD 238 as a punishment for their support of Maximinus and following Capellianus (governor of Numidia at the time) who commanded the legion. The legion was relocated and used for example on the Rhine, but eventually reconstituted under Valerian, who made it more of a mobile army (consisting of *comitatenses* or field units) to counter the attacks of the Moorish tribes. Both infantry and cavalry units were recruited from the Romanized rural population who lived in the vicinity of the camps. The mobile field army was supported by the *limitanei*, the peasants who were granted plots of land on the *limes* or frontier zones and served as soldiers guarding these frontiers. The *limitanei* received certain privileges for their services, such as tax exemption (Bénabou 1976a: 207-215).

About the lifestyles of the wives of the soldiers we have virtually no information. The wives of senior officers were without doubt much better off than the spouses of legionaries, but for all levels the risks of death and disruption were not as great as might be supposed. The African provinces were relatively peaceful up to the end of the 4<sup>th</sup> century (Cherry 1998: 55). Shaw (1983: 139) calculates the survival rate of recruits to the age of 45 (retirement age) to be an average percentage of approximately 69%. Relocation was also a possibility, given a rather dramatic voice by the wife of John Troglita, who followed her husband to his war in Africa:

*mene peregrinam sors haec miserabilis urgens / in Libyam duxit, pelago terraue secutam / coniugis arma mei?*  
Was this the miserable lot in life that drove me on, that led me as a foreigner to Libya, following on land and sea  
the weapons of my husband? [Cor., *Ioh.* 7.171-173]

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instruments of war' (γυμνοί τε ὀπλῶν καὶ ὀργάνων πολεμικῶν), it seems likely that given the general military ethos these men also did not generally mix with the general population. A cohort was despatched every year to the governor at Carthage (Shaw 1983: 139). See also Salvian [*De Gub. Dei* 7.68] on soldiers as part of the Carthaginian populace.

<sup>23</sup> On the placement of veterans of three legions in Mauretania, N.C. MACKIE (1983): 'Augustan colonies in Mauretania', *Historia* 32, 342ff, and on the 1<sup>st</sup> century veteran colony at Setif, P.-A. FÉVRIER (1964): 'Notes sure le développement urbain en Afrique du Nord. Les exemples comparés de Djémila et de Sétif', *Cahiers archéologique* 14, 1-48. References from MacMullen (1990): 369 n 12.

<sup>24</sup> The general context of the revolt is discussed above, p. 39.



## LOVE, DESIRE AND MAGIC

‘L’amour n’étant que le reflet d’une culture, il devient évident que les rapports entre amour et expression de l’amour varient selon les temps et les lieux’ (Ladjimi-Sebaï 1990b: 205-6). So what did Roman Africans think about love, or more accurately, how did they express their views on love during the period from the beginning of the 1<sup>st</sup> to the end of the 6<sup>th</sup> century AD?

We are informed by Livy that the marriage of the Numidian king Syphax to Hasdrubal’s daughter Sophonisba was easily arranged because ‘above all barbarians the Numidians are steeped in passion’ (*sunt ante omnes barbaros Numidae effusi in venerem*) [29.23.4] and also that another Numidian, Masinissa, fell passionately in love with Sophonisba, for he had the ‘amorous susceptibility of the Numidian race’ (*ut est genus Numidarum in Venerem praeceps*) [30.12]. It is a moot point whether or not Africans were unusually passionate, but they appear to have been seen as such by the Romans (Haley 1990).<sup>25</sup> But it was not only the Romans who had this view. Later Arab writers, for example the 10<sup>th</sup> century Yemenite al-Hamdānī, mentions the Numidians and Gaetuli as being ‘in their natures very hot and fiery’ [*Kitāb Sifat al-Jazīra*].<sup>26</sup> Masinissa at least gave some support to this view - he fathered no less than forty-four sons (not to mention daughters) the last of them at the age of eighty-six (Law 1978: 181).<sup>27</sup> Although Salvian is undoubtedly obsessed with the low moral fibre of the Africans, his attack on their lifestyle may therefore not be mere Christian rhetoric about the ‘sins of the flesh’:

*Ac primum, ut de impuritate dicamus, quis nescit Africam totam obscenis libidinum taedis semper arsisse, non ut terram ad sedem hominum, sed ut Aetnam putes impudicarum fuisse flammamarum? Nam sicut Aetna intestinis quibusdam naturae ferventis ardoribus sic illa abominandis iugiter fornicationum ignibus aestuavit.*

Who does not know that all Africa always burned with the obscene resinous tree of lust, so that you might think it was not a land and site of men, but an Aetna of unchaste flames? Just as Aetna is naturally heated with certain inner burning fires, so that land is constantly heated by the abominable fires of fornication. [De Gub. Dei 7.16]

Inscriptions attest in almost all cases to marital relationships and even though these may express intense and enduring love, it is not the passionate love or lust voiced in other sources. Within marriage romantic love - love at first sight and the physical symptoms that accompany it - was not likely to occur for men and women who already share the union of marriage.<sup>28</sup> Augustine [Conf. 3.3.5] discloses that he arranged an assignation with a woman in a Church. In all likelihood this was a woman of humble status - marriage, both parties knew, was not an option. Augustine also speaks of his relationship with his concubine as ‘the mere bargain of a lustful love’ (*pactum libidinosi amoris*) [Conf. 4.2.2]. The manner in which Apuleius’ accusers appear to have spoken of Pudentilla’s love for her husband would not have placed her in a good light were it not for the fact that they

<sup>25</sup> In addition to Haley’s references see also the portrayal of a hot-blooded Syphax by Silius Italicus [Pun. 17.70-75].

<sup>26</sup> See also the comments on different African tribes by the same author in NORRIS (1982): *The Berbers in Arabic literature*, 49 n20.

<sup>27</sup> Our images of passionate Africans are however all of men. In the *Aeneid* [4.41 the Numidians are ‘unrestrained’ (*infreni*) while in the Priapean corpus [45, 46] Moors are linked with sexuality. Juvenal [6.308 and 10.224] and Claudian [De Bello Gild. 162-168] give them a lustful image. On the practical side overpopulation is commented on in a Roman African context by Tertullian [De An. 30.4]: ‘The elements scarcely suffice us. Our needs press. There are complaints among all.’ See also Cyprian [De Hab. Virg. 83], and FRENCH’S comments (1978): ‘The Christian period in Mediterranean Africa, c. AD 200 to 700’, 458 on expansion of native fortified settlements and population increase (*castella*).

<sup>28</sup> RUDD’S article ‘Romantic love in classical times’ quoted in TREGGIARI (1991a): *Roman marriage*, 253. Referring to marriage, FANTHAM ET AL (1994): *Woman in the Classical world*, 319, state ‘However, we do not see here the kind of romantic love and physical passion that Propertius, Ovid or Sulpicia describe in their poems; the evidence seems to suggest that Romans associated these intense emotions with affairs rather than with upper-class marriage’.



attribute this love to Apuleius' use of magic (*magicorum maleficiorum* and *artis nefandas* [Apol. 1; 25]) to inveigle Pudentilla to marry him (Winkler 1990).<sup>29</sup> The implication is that it would not otherwise have been possible for a respectable citizen *matrona* to have loved (or at least expressed her feelings) in this fashion:<sup>30</sup>

*'sed', inquit 'animi furens fuit, efflictim te amabat'*

'But', says my accuser, 'she was out of her wits, she loved you distractedly.'

[Apol. 79]

Apuleius counters this by saying that the *feeling* is perfectly normal, but social convention and personal interest make women blame its cause on something other than themselves:

*.. ac non omnibus mulieribus haec ars usitata est, ut, cum aliquid eius modi velle coeperunt, malint coactae videri?*

Is it not a device common to all women that, when they have begun to feel strong desire for anything of this kind, they should prefer to make themselves out the victims of compulsion?

[Apol. 79]

Elsewhere, however, Apuleius makes every effort to present Pudentilla as 'a sensible woman, not subject to strong passions and leading a blameless life' (Hunink 1998: 279). Here we are confronted with the contradictions present in an 'ideal' image in which the self-control of the Roman *matrona* should be evident from her demeanour in which virtue is implicit, while in reality a woman such as Pudentilla sometimes behaved in an irrational manner which was less than exemplary by Roman social definitions.<sup>31</sup> Apuleius elsewhere refers to Pudentilla's 'condition', the reason why she decides to marry. He is careful to emphasize that this decision was advised by her doctors for medical reasons and had nothing to do with himself.<sup>32</sup>

From the *Apologia* it becomes evident that Apuleius is accused of making some sort of aphrodisiac from fish, even though Apuleius never mentions the charge directly (Harrison 2000: 66), and although Apuleius excuses his interest in fish by professing a scientific curiosity, science was not so far removed from magic in antiquity - even someone of medical training like Soranus [*Gyn.* 3.42] believed that amulets were useful as placebos. Bradley (1997: 210) also proves Apuleius' assertion that fish were not associated with magical practice false, citing references from Ovid's *Fasti* to Pliny the Elder's remark that a small rock fish had a reputation for supplying love-charms [*NH* 9.79].<sup>33</sup>

Whether Apuleius was guilty of employing such arts nor not, the entire court case at the very least says something about contemporary beliefs regarding magic and its potency in regard to love and marriage.<sup>34</sup> This belief in the use of magic to make one partner fall in love with another is not infrequent in the African context, although the sources indicate less sophisticated participants than the cultivated and erudite Apuleius and Pudentilla. In the more general sense casting spells was already well established before the arrival of the Romans. Pliny the Elder tells of the powers of the native 'families' (*familias*) in casting spells [*NH* 7.2.16]

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<sup>29</sup> In the *Metamorphoses* 3.17 and 9.29 Apuleius reveals a sound knowledge of the world of spells. In all these scenes the clients and professionals are women.

<sup>30</sup> On this perception in antiquity generally see MURGATROYD (1983): 'Magic imagery applied to love'.

<sup>31</sup> HUNINK (1998): 'The enigmatic lady Pudentilla', 287, hints at this aspect in the context of the *Apologia* as a whole: 'Several of its personae are pictured as caricatures, such as the drunken witness Crassus (59) or the immoral pimp Rufinus (74). This may also have affected the image of Pudentilla: she is stylized as a loving mother who forgives her sons' errors while firmly sticking to her principles'

<sup>32</sup> Irrational behaviour in women and 'hysteria' were ascribed to a wandering womb. See discussion in Chapter 8, pp. 183-184.

<sup>33</sup> BRADLEY (1997): 'Law, magic and culture in the *Apologia* of Apuleius' contends that it must have been apparent that Apuleius' contention was suspicious, but that the orator placed his reliance not on the truth of this issue, but on forging an élite alliance with the proconsul hearing the case based on a mutual education and background.

<sup>34</sup> Evidence and scholarly references for popular belief in magic across the Roman world are briefly cited in BRADLEY (1997): 'Law, magic and culture in the *Apologia*', 209 n.12.



although his examples of magical powers across the rest of the known world are so luridly exaggerated that the merit of this observation, which he attributes to Isagorus and Nymphodorus, would be debatable were it to be our only reference.<sup>35</sup> This activity does not appear to have abated with Roman occupation, and much of our information is derived from *defixiones* or cursing tablets which have been discovered especially at Carthage and Hadrumetum.<sup>36</sup> Tertullian too was aware of the popularity of all types of curses and spells in North African communities [*De Orat.* 29.1], as was Augustine in his day [*De Civ. Dei* 18.23; *Conf.* 4.2].

In the context of the Roman world as a whole, several scholars such as Winkler (1990), Graf (1999) and Dickie (2000), have pointed to the discrepancy between literature (which ascribes such activity to women as the weapon of the weak) and the epigraphical evidence of *defixiones*, which shows that the majority of persons who commissioned spells was male.<sup>37</sup> The Roman African non-literary evidence has a slightly larger proportion of women commissioning curses than elsewhere (Dickie 2000), although this has little significance when we have such a small sample of evidence. Dickie argues convincingly that the predominance of women practising magic in literary accounts is due to the fact that Roman authors were generally reluctant to attribute such nefarious activities to men.<sup>38</sup> Apart from Apuleius, a number of prominent Roman African men such as Septimius Severus and the proconsul Apronianus were accused of and tried on the charge of magic [*Cod. Theod.* 9.16.4-6; Ammianus Marcellinus 28.1.17]. Such accusations were probably politically motivated and lend support to Dickie's theory that men did not like to be associated with such activities. Severus' liking for other less orthodox quasi-religious practices, for example his African belief in dreams [*SHA: Sept. Sev.* 19.10; *Geta* 2.6] may have made him a more likely target for charges of magic. He was also thought to have used astrology to point to the ideal marital union.<sup>39</sup> Astrology is often mentioned in the same breath as magic and was similarly viewed as a nefarious activity.

Seeking guidance and assistance in love through magic was not uncommon. Gager (1992: 78-79) estimates that one quarter of all *defixiones* concern matters of the heart and comments on the 'deeply aggressive, even violent language of the amatory *defixiones*' (1992: 81), although he notes that such language should not be taken too literally. He also points out (1992: 78-79) that this is one area in which women's own wishes are recorded (even if not in their own words). The following text dates to the 3<sup>rd</sup> century AD:

Αδ[ιορ]ο επ . . . περ μαγνουμ δεουμ επ | περ [άν]θέροτας . . . επ περ εουμ κουι αβει | αρχεπτορεμ σουπρα χαπουθ  
επ περ σε|πτεμ στελλας ου<υ>θ εξ κουα ορα | οχ σομπ'οσουερο νον δορμιαθ Σεξ|τίλλιος Διονισίε φίλιους  
ουραθουρ | φουρενς νον δορμιαθ νεκουε σεδεατ | νεκουε λοκουατουρ σεδ ιν μεντεμ αβ|ιατ με Σέπθιμαμ Άμένε

<sup>35</sup> Procopius mentions that among the Mauri only women were permitted to foretell the future and utter oracles [*De Bell. Vand.* 4.8.12]. BATES (1970): *The Eastern Libyans*, 178, comments on the predominance of Libyan women in the magic arts, and ascribes this to local custom, although this is common also among other Mediterranean peoples such as the Greeks.

<sup>36</sup> Some relevant comments are also made by BRASHEAR (1995): 'The Greek magical papyri' in his general survey of the subject.

<sup>37</sup> To this evidence that of late Roman Law can be added, which gave as one of the grounds of divorce for either sex the fact that their partner was a *medicamentaria/us* or sorceress/ sorcerer [*Cod. Theod.* 3.16.1].

<sup>38</sup> Also WALCOT'S comment (1991): 'On widows and their reputation in Antiquity', 20 'What is surprising, however, is that here a man [Apuleius] is accused of witchcraft when 'the old woman was the witch and sorceress *par excellence* in antiquity' (quoting Bremmer in Blok and Mason 1987: 204).

<sup>39</sup> *cum amissa uxore aliam vellet ducere, genituras sponsarum requirebat, ipse quoque matheseos peritissimus, et cum audisset esse in Syria quandam quae id geniturae haberet ut regi iungeretur, eandem uxorem petiit, Iuliam scilicet, et accepit interventu amicorum.* He had meanwhile lost his wife, and now, wishing to take another, he made inquiries about the horoscopes of marriageable women, being himself no mean astrologer; and when he heard that there was a woman in Syria whose horoscope predicted that she would wed a king (I mean Julia, of course), he sought her for his wife, and through the mediation of his friends secured her [*SHA: Sept. Sev.* 3.9].



φιλια ουρα|θουρ φουρενς αμορε ετ δεσιδεριο | μεο ανιμα ετ χορ ουραθουρ Σεξι|λι Διονισιε φιλιους αμορε ετ  
δεσιδε|ριο μεο Σεπτίμες Άμένε φιλιε του αυ|τεμ Αβαρ Βαρβαριε Ελοεε Σαβαοθ | Παχνουφν Πυθιπεμι φαχ  
Σεξι|λίουμ Διονισίε φιλιουμ νε σομνου|μ χονθινγαθ σεθ αμορε ετ δεσιδε|ριο μεο ουραθουρ ουιους σιπιριτους  
| ετ χορ χομβουρατουρ ομνια μεμ|βρα θοθιους χορπορις Σεξιτίλι Διονι|σιε φιλιους σι μινους δεσχενδο ιν α|δουτους  
Όσυρις ετ διςσολουαμ θεν | θαπεεν ετ μιτταμ ουθ αφουτ | αφλουμινε φερατουρ | εγω ενιμ σουμ μαγνους |  
δεχανους δει μαγνι δει | ΑΧΡΑΜΜΑΧΑΛΑΛ · Α

I ask... by the great god and the Anteros and by the one who has a falcon on his head and by the seven stars, that the moment when I have composed this Sextilius, son of Dionysia, will sleep no more, that he burn up and be made mad, and that he neither sleep nor be able to sit nor speak, but that he has me in his mind, me Septima, daughter of Amoena, that he is consumed, mad with love and desire for me, that the soul and heart of Sextilius, son of Dionysia,<sup>40</sup> be consumed with love and desire for me Septima, daughter of Amoena. And you, Abar, Barbarie, Eloee, Pachnouphy, Puthiemi, grant that Sextilius, son of Dionysia, never find any sleep but be consumed with love and desire for me, that his spirit and body be burned up and every part of the entire body of Sextilius, sons of Dionysia. And if not I shall descend into the cave of Osiris and I will destroy the mummy and send it into the river which carries it for I am the great Decan of the great god Achrammachalala.

[Hadrumentum, *DT* 270 (transl. Soren 1990: 245)]<sup>41</sup>

Clearly this frustrated woman is putting her faith in the art of the magician.<sup>42</sup> Another spell from Hadrumentum from the same period [*DT* 271] was commissioned by one Domitiana, in the hope that Urbanus would ask her to be his wife:

... καὶ ἄξον αὐτὸν πρὸς τὴν Δομιτιανὴν, ἣν ἔτεκεν Κανδιδά, ἐρῶντα μαινόμενον ἀγρυπνοῦντα ἐπὶ τῇ φιλίᾳ αὐτῆς καὶ δεόμενον αὐτῆς ἐπανελθεῖν εἰς τὴν οἰκίαν αὐτοῦ σύμβιον<sup>43</sup> γενέσθαι. ... ζευξον αὐτοὺς γάμῳ καὶ ἔρωτι συμβιούντας ὅλω τῷ τῆς ζωῆς αὐτῶν χρόνῳ ποιήσον αὐτὸν ὡς δοῦλον αὐτῇ ἐρῶντα ὑποτεταχθῆναι, μηδεμίαν ἄλλη[ν] γυναῖκα μήτε παρθένον ἐπιθυμοῦντα, μόνην δὲ τὴν Δομιτια[νάν], ἣν ἔτεκεν Κανδιδά, σύμβιον ἔχειν ὅλω τῷ τῆς ζωῆς αὐτῷ[ν χρόνῳ] ....

... and bring him to Domitiana, so that loving, frantic and sleepless with love and desire for her, he may beg her to return to his house and become his wife. ... Unite them in marriage and as spouses in love for all the time of their lives. Make him as her obedient slave, so that he will desire no other woman or maiden apart from Domitiana alone... and will keep her as his spouse for all the time of their lives ...

In both texts the individuals were probably freed slaves. Septima and especially Domitiana seem to be more interested the security of binding their man to them than in a sexual encounter, which is usually the focus of similar *defixiones* by men (Dickie 2000: 566). The second text contains many references to the Septuagint and other Greek/Jewish texts, although this does not necessarily mean that either Domitiana or the professional curse-writer<sup>44</sup> was Jewish but that these references had probably become part of the lore of the *magoi* by this

<sup>40</sup> The emphasis on descent through the female line was customary in such *defixiones*. Possible explanations for this are given by Gager (1992: 14): 'Various explanations have been advanced for this unusual custom: because precise identification was necessary, only the mother could be known for certain; influence may have come from Babylonia or Egypt, where matrilineal lineage appears in early spells; the practice was taken over from the world of slaves, who were regularly identified by matrilineal descent; and in Egypt, Jewish and Christian funerary monuments sometimes identify the deceased by descent from the mother. . . . In the end, however, the practice must also be related to the counter cultural and subversive character of the *defixiones* themselves'. The importance of women and the female line of descent in sorcery practised in black Africa (for example Uganda or Senegal) is corroborated by DIOP (1959: 36-37 - 'peu importe ce qu'est le père') in the context of his discussion on African matriarchy.

<sup>41</sup> The transliteration from Latin to Greek is also featured in other tablets from Hadrumentum [*DT* 267, 269 and 270] although according to Origen [*Contra Cels.* 1.25] a spell that is transliterated is weak and ineffective. No explanation of this is offered by modern scholars. Possibly the author of the text had no knowledge of the Latin alphabet, although Hadrumentum lay in a Romanized area.

<sup>42</sup> The curse is discussed by CHARLES-PICARD (1954): *Les religions*, 245; DICKIE (2000) 'Who practised love-magic?', 574.

<sup>43</sup> The Greek *sumbios* is regularly used in papyri for husband or wife (Gager 1992: 113 n.121).

<sup>44</sup> There was usually a distinction between the person who commissioned the spell and the one who actually put it into the right format. Cursing tablets found at Hadrumentum bearing the same style could imply what Gager (1992: 5) calls a 'cottage industry' at work. See JORDAN (1976): 'CIL VIII 19525', 127-132.



time - such curses were often copied from original models (Gager 1996: 112).<sup>45</sup>

In the African literature, notably the *Metamorphoses* [2.5, 3.15-16] it is a woman 'accounted the chief and principal magician and enchantress of every necromantic spell' (*maga primi nominis et omnis carminis sepulchralis magistra creditur*) whom Lucius sees at work in her laboratory and whom he tries to imitate with comically disastrous results. But Pamphile is not portrayed as a woman of élite status. Similarly the adulterous wife of the baker in the *Metamorphoses* [9.29-30], a woman of humble status, commissions a spell to make sure that she does not lose the affection of her husband, and failing that, to 'to invoke some spirit or infernal deity to put a violent end to his days'. Her lack of compunction is portrayed in accordance with her status - in literature respectable women did not sink to such depths, but prostitutes and women of no morals did not scruple to do so. No women of élite status are depicted in literature as employing the magic arts. Even African Dido, Vergil tells us, does so only when she is possessed by demon powers, and she tells her sister 'it is against my will that I arm myself with magic' (*magicas invitam accingier artis*) [*Aen.* 4.492-3].

Nine erotic spells with women as the object or *defixa* are known from Roman Africa (six from Hadrumetum [*DT* 264; 265; 266; 267; 268; 269; 270; 271] and three from Carthage [*DT* 227; 230A, B; 231]). Dickie disagrees with the conventional view expressed by scholars such as Winkler that the women at whom the spells are directed are the carefully guarded virgins of good families. Rather, says Dickie, they are sexually active (even though this may be as widows or divorcees) and the men who commission the spells want to keep the women's attractions for their own eyes. This would indeed fit very well with what we know of native African tribal traditions dating from pre-Roman times, which had a much more casual attitude towards women's sexuality, and it is very likely that such local influences were greater on the lower orders of society, as the examples quoted above indicate. In *DT* 231 the man, Martialis, expresses the wish that a certain woman may come to love him as much as he loves her. Such an admission of feeling on the part of a man is unusual outside the *paraclausthurion* genre - in the context of the *defixiones* it has no parallel in the rest of the Graeco-Roman world. Although the evidence is slight, we may see a connection between this unusual expression of feeling and the ardour of the African race that Livy refers to at the beginning of this chapter [30.12].

Apuleius and Pudentilla aside, the groups referred to here were not part of the local Roman African élite, and as a result they do not often resurface in the rest of this study. But for a few rare exceptions, concubines, slaves or native women did not play a role in the power structures of the African cities for which the higher status groups left evidence behind, and therefore the little we hear of them is in connection with the activities which were of less immediacy for the upwardly mobile, the earthier passions of life rather than a preoccupation with status.

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<sup>45</sup> Another spell commissioned by a woman and showing evidence of the use of formulary was found at Carthage, dating from the Roman imperial period (Jordan 2001: 24-25).



## CHAPTER 6

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# MARRIAGE FOR THE ROMAN AFRICAN WOMAN

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To marry or not to marry was a central issue in the lives of all Roman women, and to choose not to marry was unusual enough even in Christian times. In this chapter I will investigate some of the aspects of marriage in the Roman African context, treating such questions as the age at which girls usually married, the importance of virginity and the reasons for marriage (or for a man choosing a particular woman to marry): lineage, wealth, potential heirs, even physical appearance. The marriage ceremony itself also receives some attention in the Roman African sources, while the projection of marriage as ideally harmonious can be contrasted with some of the practical realities of married life related by our authors.

### AGE AT MARRIAGE AND THE IMPORTANCE OF VIRGINITY

As elsewhere in the ancient world, the future of young girls in Roman Africa lay in marriage.<sup>1</sup> The description of the young Monica is typical:

*Educata itaque pudice ac sobrie .... ubi pleni annis nubilis facta est...*

She was modestly and soberly brought up ... and as soon as she was of marriageable age she was given in marriage... [Aug., *Conf.* 9.9]

'Marriageable age' for a young girl was set by Augustan legislation at twelve [*Cod. Iust.* 5.4.24],<sup>2</sup> but it is doubtful whether girls were wed at this young age, particularly in the provinces. An initial statistical study by

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<sup>1</sup> But see LASSÈRE (1977): *Ubique populus*, 482 n.13, for a list of women who do not appear to have married (deduced from the fact that their tombstones are erected by parents or siblings rather than husbands). According to this statistic quite a high percentage of Roman African women would not have married. This evidence does of course not take into account possible early death of a husband, divorce or estrangement. The reason for a woman being commemorated by her parents could also be that she was very recently married, or that she was the daughter of parents much wealthier than her own husband or more disposed to commemorate her. Remaining unmarried could be ascribed to lack of dowry or low social status, although this does not seem to have been the case of Polla, the wealthy aunt of the emperor Septimius Severus on his father's side (Birley 1988<sup>2</sup>: 1), who died unmarried. Christian women could make the choice not to marry and to devote their lives to God, but in the period under discussion, there is no evidence for this being particularly common here. Luxorius devotes a poem *In vetulam virginem nubentem* [*Epigr.* 15], the paradox lying in the term 'aged virgin', an anomaly in society even in the 5<sup>th</sup> century.

<sup>2</sup> This legal limit remained in force until the Byzantine period. The minimum age for boys was fourteen.



Hopkins<sup>3</sup> based on the epigraphical evidence centred on Rome established the average age at which girls were married as 15.5 years, but this proved to be inaccurate for the Roman provinces. The African statistics for Lambaesis, the region of Theveste and Mauretania Caesariensis compiled by Shaw (1987a) incline to an older age of 18 or 19, based firstly on a study of inscriptions which give the age at death and the length of marriage, and based especially on whether the deceased woman was commemorated by her mother/father (in which event she would presumably be unmarried) and her given age at death.<sup>4</sup> Shaw also points to other interesting aspects such as the fact that Christian epitaphs, also on average showing a later age at marriage, are invariably erected by members of a lower status group (judging by the quality of the stone and execution of the inscription) than the slaves and freedmen who are most commonly the dedicators in the pagan context (1987a: 40-41).<sup>5</sup> The Christian epitaphs therefore reflect a pattern of marriage from a lower social level which had formerly not been represented. It is therefore debatable whether the later age at marriage is a reflection of this lower social order or whether it is the result of Christian influence. By the 4<sup>th</sup> century a North African Council advised 20 as the age at which women could reject marriage and take vows of virginity. It seems that African bishops felt that a woman of 20 who was not yet married would be less likely to contract a marriage. A Spanish Council chose 40, and Leo settled on the latter as the age at which marriage was unlikely to occur [*Nov. Leo and Maior.* 6, AD 458] (Clark 1993: 81).

If indeed girls in the African provinces were married at a later age, this would also go some way towards explaining a higher level of formal education for young women of prosperous status, since this probably came to an end at marriage unless the husband-as-mentor took over.<sup>6</sup> Conversely it could also be (as in the case of Volusia Tertullina [*AE* 1994, 1903], who was married at the age of twenty-three) that educated women, at least in Africa, married at an older age than was the case for the majority of girls in Rome. It is possible that a high level of education was regarded as a step towards autonomy, as in the case of Apuleius' portrait of Pudentilla, where he clearly makes this association for the benefit of his audience.<sup>7</sup> The *Passio SS. Perpetuae et Felicitatis* tells us that:

*Vibia Perpetua, honesta nata, liberaliter instituta, matronaliter nupta ... et filium infantem ad ubera. Erat autem ipsa circiter annorum viginti duo.*

Vibia Perpetua, a newly married woman of good family and upbringing ... breastfeeding an infant son. She was about twenty-two years old. [*Passio P & F* 2.1-3]

Recently married and still breastfeeding [2.1-2], this was probably her only child, since it is the only one Perpetua herself mentions. Her age at marriage can be calculated (although the information is too slight to establish this absolutely) as being between 18 and 20 years old.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> HOPKINS (1965a): 'The age of Roman girls at marriage'

<sup>4</sup> Of course the basis for the latter statistics, as in the estimates of Lassère in n.1 of this chapter, is not entirely secure. In addition Shaw's statistics rely heavily on the statistics of military settlements or veteran colonies, which may not be representative for the rest of the African cities. Some general comparisons are also drawn by MORIZOT (1989): 'L'âge au mariage des jeunes Romaines à Rome et en Afrique', but the emphasis is more on the age for males.

<sup>5</sup> The latter 'effect a form of imitation of the styles set by the rich and powerful whom they served' (Shaw 1987a: 40).

<sup>6</sup> For Rome Suetonius [*De Gram.* 16] does present one instance of a tutor for a married woman, Pomponia the wife of Marcus Agrippa, but the tutor was dismissed because Agrippa suspected him of improper behaviour towards his young wife. See VILJAMAA (1991): 'Suetonius on Roman teachers of grammar'.

<sup>7</sup> Factors contributing to female autonomy are discussed at greater length in Chapter 10.

<sup>8</sup> SHAW (1993): 'The passion of Perpetua', 11-12, estimates her age at 18 or 19.



In the case of a first marriage a young woman had little say in the matter of choosing her husband according to Roman tradition. If she were a very young bride (15 years of age or less), for example as in *CIL* 2756, her prospective (older) husband's advantage lay in the fact that he would be able to keep his young bride in line by the *auctoritas* of his years. Apuleius relates further advantages of taking a young bride in this highly idealized rhetorical passage:

*Virgo formosa etsi sit oppido pauper, tamen [h]abunde dotata est; affert quippe ad maritum novum animi indolem, pulchritudinis gratiam, floris rudimentum. Ipsa virginitatis commendatio iure meritoque omnibus maritis acceptissima est; ... Sola virginitas cum semel accepta est, reddi nequitur, sola apud maritum ex rebus dotalibus remanet.*

A beautiful maiden, even though she is poor, is amply dowered. For she brings to her husband a fresh untainted spirit, the charm of her beauty, the unblemished glory of her prime. The very fact that she is a maiden is rightly and deservedly regarded by all husbands as the strongest recommendation.... Virginitas only, once it has been given, can never be repaid; it is the one portion of the dowry that remains irrevocably with the husband. [*Apol.* 92]

For the young bride things may have been less ideal. Apuleius' pathetic picture of the young girl about to be married attended by her anxious mother sounds real enough, despite his dramatic purpose of creating contrast with her unexpected kidnapping by robbers:

*Tunc me gremio suo mater infelix tolerans mundo nuptiali decenter ornabat, mellitisque saviis crebriter ingestis iam spem futuram liberorum votis anxiiis propagabat, cum irruptionis subitae gladiatorum ....*

Then my unhappy mother was pampering me in her lap and decking me like a bride, kissing me sweetly and praying earnestly for the hope of future grandchildren, when suddenly brigands broke in .... [*Metam.* 4.26]<sup>9</sup>

In the Graeco-Roman tradition the early age for marriage of girls was meant to ensure their virginity, a prized virtue related to the functional concept of women's sexuality in antiquity. The following dedicatory wish for an infant daughter clearly establishes the link between chastity (which meant 'virginity' for young girls) and marriage, and the absence of the possibility of marrying for love:

PHILIPPEVILLE RUSICADE

[*CIL* 8123; *CLE* 1287; *ILALG* II 281]

POMPEIA CHIA | V(IXIT) A(NNIS) XXV HIC S(ITA) E(ST) | OPTO MEAE CASTE CONTINGAT VI|VERE NATAE UT  
NOSTRA EXEMPLO DISCAT AMARE | VIRUM

Pompeia Chia lived 25 years. Here she rests. I wish that it may it befall my child to live chastely so that she may learn to love her husband by our example.

There is, however, no unusually great emphasis on the virtues of virginity compared to the attitude of traditional male authors writing for the élite classes in Rome, with whom this may have become something of a formulaic tradition.<sup>10</sup> It is possible that the later age for a first marriage for women deduced from inscriptions is an indication that, despite the emphasis on virginity/chastity in inscriptions and literature, in actual practice Roman African parents were not so obsessed with it that they married their children off virtually out of the cradle.<sup>11</sup>

The term 'virgo' is used in seven pagan inscriptions from Africa to emphasize purity and chastity.<sup>12</sup> Varia

<sup>9</sup> This may be contrasted with the brassy caricature in the *Apologia* [76.4]: *pudore dispoliato, flore exsoleto, flammeo obsoleto* ('her virtue lost, her modesty gone, her bridal veil out of date'). HUNINK (1997): *Apuleius of Madauros: Pro se de magia*, 195, notes that the immodest behaviour of this bride making eyes at all the young men from her litter is largely a stereotype also seen in Cicero's portrayal of Clodia [*Pro Cael.* 49].

<sup>10</sup> Some of the texts in the Elder Seneca's *Controversiae* place great emphasis on the virginity of brides, as does Plutarch [*Lyc.* and *Numa.* 4; *Mor.* 138E] when he says that Roman girls are married at a young age to preserve their sexual purity.

<sup>11</sup> In this regard DICKIE's argument ('Who practised love-magic' (2000) discussed in Chapter 5) that the women at whom love-spells are directed are not the carefully guarded virgins of good families is also entirely plausible, although of course this does not mean that there were no carefully guarded virgin daughters. It may also broaden Dickie's category of experienced women or even widows to include young women not as carefully guarded as may be supposed from the literature.

<sup>12</sup> *CIL* 648; 2953; 9132; 9686, 11372; 18965; 21142; 24703.



Honorata, for example, died at the age of 21 before her impending marriage [CIL 9686]. One imagines that, as she shares her tomb with M(arcus) Valerius Urbanus, they had been engaged to be married.

Under the influence of Christianity virginity gained an extra dimension, since while in pagan society virginity was something that ended in marriage, under the Christian ethic it became an end in itself, a symbol of commitment and greatly idealized by Christian writers. Brown notes that 'while [Augustine's] defence of married life was conscientious, his treatise on virginity was quite lyrical' (1967: 249), and in the church the virgins who had committed themselves to serving God sat behind a balustrade of white marble [CIL 17810], a symbol of purity and commitment to God. Midwives were kept busy testing the virginity of such balustraded virgins to demonstrate their continued commitment,<sup>13</sup> and Augustine relates one instance where a midwife inadvertently destroyed the evidence of virginity that she was supposed to investigate [Civ. Dei 1.18]. Engagements and marriage also underwent a number of changes. In his *De Oratione* [22.10] Tertullian comments on the *sponsa* or engagement of Roman African girls of Christian persuasion, and argues that from the moment when the girl and her *sponsus* join hands and exchange a kiss, she should be veiled, since these actions make her through physical contact and in her mind already a mature young woman, ready to consummate a marriage. As pointed out by Treggiari (1991: 151), other (pagan) authors take these actions as perfectly normal in engaged couples. Tertullian's remarks imply that marriage was a step that should be taken sooner rather than later once an understanding had been reached. But by the 4<sup>th</sup> century it appears that long engagements were quite common, which confirms our information about the later age of marriage for Roman African women:

*et institutum est, ut iam pactae sponsae non tradantur statim, ne vile habeat maritus datam, quam non suspiraverit sponsus dilatam.*

It is also the custom that the engaged girl is not instantly to be given to her sweetheart, lest the man as a husband should think less of her for being so soon obtained, she for whom he had not sighed after, thinking her too long delayed. [Conf. 8.3.7]

For men the situation was quite different, and most Roman African youths probably followed the path described by Augustine as 'boiling over in my fornications' (*ebulliebam per fornicationes meas*) [Conf. 2.2.3] before marriage was contemplated.

## THE REASONS FOR MARRIAGE

There were four congenital or inherent attributes which were desirable in a prospective bride, their relative importance depending on the status group from which the parties stemmed: her physical aspect, the status of her own birth, her family's wealth and her ability to bear children to her future husband. Undoubtedly the first was the least important, but nevertheless not ignored in the Roman African context.

**'O quantum indulget vestro natura decori' [Ovid, *Ars Amat.* 3.159]**

Lust and love, as indicated in Chapter 5, were not aspects which traditionally were given a lot of attention as a motive for marriage among the propertied classes. In 1<sup>st</sup> century Rome Ovid's attention to such frivolous matters as physical attraction may not have counted in his favour either. But this did not mean, of course, that

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<sup>13</sup> As paralleled by John Chrysostom [PG 47.516].

this aspect was ignored, even among the élite. Apuleius points out [*Apol.* 92] that a beautiful maiden (*virgo formosa*) needs no dowry, for she brings the charm of her beauty.<sup>14</sup> This was undoubtedly overstating the case,<sup>15</sup> but Tertullian gives the matter of beauty a more pragmatic slant, being of the opinion that no wife is ugly to her own husband, since:

*Satis placuit cum electa est seu moribus seu forma commendata.*

She was certainly pleasing to him when he chose to marry her, whether it was for her beauty or for her character.

[*Cult. Fem.* 2.4.1]

Beauty in a wife or daughter awarded value because it made the object more desirable, even though this value cannot be calculated in exact material terms. In the ancient novel we are often reminded of how beauty and birth are seen as interrelated - the beautiful heroine can only be nobly born, which even strangers can see at a glance [*Heliod., Aeth.* 1.2.1; 1.2.5].<sup>16</sup> In real life it was not likely on its own merit to make a woman marriageable, however. Physical beauty is not overly emphasized in the Roman African context,<sup>17</sup> and certainly under Christian influence physical beauty could even be counted a demerit in a radical disdain for sexuality and even for procreation.<sup>18</sup> However, this asceticism would have affected a minority of the Roman African population. In pagan Roman antiquity beauty was perceived as a feminine virtue when mentioned on tombstones (Kleiner and Matheson 2000: 8), but beyond a reference to beauty, inscriptions seldom make verbal references to the details of appearance of the individual. Mevia Felicitas, for example, is praised generally for her beauty (*Fuit enim forma certior*) [*CIL* 403 = 11511 & p.2359; *CLE* 1329; *ILT* 421] and Amymone too receives this praise with other accolades:

HAÏDRA (AMMAEDARA)

[*ILCII* 4639]

HIC SITA EST AMYMONE MARCI OPTIMA ET PULCHERRIMA / LANIFICA PIA PUDICA FRUG(ALITA) CASTA  
DOMISEDA

Here lies Amymone of Marcus, the best and most beautiful, a wool worker, pious, modest, frugal, chaste and who looked after the affairs of the house.

These and other general descriptive terms, such as *decora* [*CIL* 9686], *formosa* [*AE* 1995, 1793; *CIL* 3798], *specie* [*IL Afr* 158] or *eximia specie* [*CIL* 13110 = *CLE* 1188; *CIL* 3638] are used. For the purpose of forming a picture of the Roman African ideal of beauty none of this information is, however, very helpful, not even when the occasional word with a special qualitative meaning is used, as for Cornelia Galla, described as a *lepida* [*CIL* 434 = 11518 & p.2359; *CLE* 480; *ILT* 426]. Literature is often equally unspecific. In the 6<sup>th</sup> century Procopius remarks that Belisarius' men were drunk with victory, becoming the masters of great wealth and of 'women both young and extremely comely' (σωμάτων δὲ ὡραίων τε καὶ ὑπερφυῶς εὐπρεπῶν) [*De Bell. Vand.* 4.4.3]. It is highly likely that these young women were of native African or mixed descent since although the battle had been fought about 25 kilometers from Carthage, the soldiers do not appear to have come upon these women in towns

<sup>14</sup> The text is quoted on p. 93.

<sup>15</sup> As SALLER (1984a): 'Roman dowry and the devolution of property in the principate', 202 n.38, notes, there is no evidence for young beautiful brides going without dowries.

<sup>16</sup> The same assumption of status and beauty is made by BANDINELLI: (1966): *The buried city: excavations of Leptis Magna*, 50, on the portrait of a young woman he titles 'la Bellissima' - he assumes that she must be from the family of a highly placed Roman official. (Figure 6.1).

<sup>17</sup> Compare for example Ovid's *Ars Amatoria* where a great deal of attention is paid to it. Conversely ugliness is often mentioned by the satirists as a demotivator.

<sup>18</sup> Beauty is of course also occasionally the subject of criticism among pagan authors such as satirists or for example Ovid as a sign of vanity or potential infidelity, particularly when enhancement of a woman's appearance is the subject of discussion (on this aspect in particular, WYKE (1994): 'Women in the mirror').



but in valleys and rough country (νάπαις καὶ δυσχωρίαις) [4.4.4]. By contrast the Garamantian girls are given short shrift by Luxorius in the following epigram, where they are compared unfavourably with Pontic girls:<sup>19</sup>

*In eum qui foedas amabat:*

*Diligit informes et foedas Myrro puellas.  
Quas aliter pulcro viderit ore, timet.  
Iudicium hoc quale est oculorum, Myrro, fatere,*

*Ut tibi non placeat Pontica, sed Garamas.  
Iam tamen agnosco cur tales quaeris amicas.  
Pulcra tibi numquam, se dare foeda potest.*

*Against a lover of ugly girls*

Myrro loves hideous and ugly girls. On the other hand, he fears any beautiful girl he sees. In this way, Myrro, you reveal what kind of judgment it is that your eyes have so that a Pontic girl does not please you, but a Garamantian does! yet I now know why you seek such lovers. A beautiful girl can never give herself to you, an ugly one may.

[Epigr. 43]



FIGURE 6.1 PORTRAIT FROM LEPCIS MAGNA

Sculpture is equally unhelpful in identifying what was considered beauty in Roman Africa, since not only beautiful women are commemorated in this way, which can be seen from the illustrations in Chapter 8 - young and old were represented. Ovid in 1<sup>st</sup> century Rome admired the rounded face [*Ars Amat.* 3.139-140], such as that of a young woman from Lepcis Magna from the same period (Figure 6.1). Her Italian discoverers entitled her bust 'la bellissima', and it is possible that Roman African and Italian tastes coincide in this case. All in all, general references to women's beauty, even if they cannot be taken literally and it is difficult to establish what these descriptions equate to in modern terms, tell us that it was an aspect worth commemorating on stone and that it conferred some small degree of mutual prestige both on the deceased and on the commemorator. But a woman's physical aspect was often not of primary concern in a society where first

marriages in particular were arranged by parents, and where it was usually family interests rather than individual wishes which prevailed (Treggiari 1991c: 100). The status of her parental home in terms of wealth and position in society were important for all but the most humble and unambitious of status groups.

### Wealth and status

The acquisition of wealth (through a woman's dowry or inheritance) and establishing connections with a family

<sup>19</sup> This may to some extent have been a question of colour, although in antiquity there seems to have been no indication of racism in the modern sense of imputing some sort of biological inferiority to specific race groups: '...the ancient world did not make color the focus of irrational sentiments or the basis for uncritical evaluation' (Snowden 1983: 63). The Garamantes were very dark and apparently exhibited some Negroid features, although they were not actually Negroid (Desanges 1976: 246; Snowden 1983: 9). They were at any rate undoubtedly darker than Pontic women. Writing in approximately the same period, Claudian informs us that Gildo forced the women of Carthage into unions which produced children 'of a colour to frighten the cradle itself' [*De Bello Gild.* 192-193], and while this may not be historical, it does tell us something about attitudes to physical appearance - for both men and women - at the time. Claudian first refers to the fathers as Aethiopians, but later as Nasamones. According to the *Catalogue des tribus africaines de l'Antiquité classique à l'ouest du Nil* (Desanges 1962: 154 n.6), the Nasamones and the Aethiopians were sometimes considered to be related. 'Interracial unions were frequent enough in the empire for satirists to find the birth of a Negroid child a source of amusement for the Roman public when it pointed to adultery' (Snowden 1970: 178-179). In the *Aethiopika* it is assumed that adultery would be suspected when the Queen gives birth to a white child. See also p. 26 n. 20.



of equal status were highly rated.<sup>20</sup> This rank and wealth would then be passed on to the future heirs the woman would bear her husband.<sup>21</sup> The widowed Pudentilla gave her husband Apuleius a dowry of HS 300 000, which Apuleius considered modest, and which appears to be so when compared to other figures of the period.<sup>22</sup> From the context of the speech it is clear that if one of the expectations of marriage, children, could not be met (and we assume that if Pudentilla was not already beyond childbearing age, she was very close to it),<sup>23</sup> it had to be compensated for in the other expectation of marriage, the dowry. Apuleius is clearly trying to outweigh this consideration by placing emphasis on his personal affection for Pudentilla and various other circumstances why they married. Nevertheless, in this case the dotal agreement stipulated that the dowry revert to the children of the former marriage if Pudentilla's marriage to Apuleius should have no issue.

Marriage from the man's point of view could also be used to enhance personal ambition. A wealthy heiress for her son was the ambition of Augustine's mother Monica while they visited Rome and the concubine was packed off home [Conf. 6.15.25]. For Augustine the only chance of a successful career beyond the confines of provincial life lay in an advantageous marriage, which would ally him with one of the great Roman families and give him the prospect of a governmental post. He would marry a rich and well-connected woman and become a local governor in some province, from where, supported by her estates and senatorial privileges, he would be able to pursue the *beata vita*.<sup>24</sup> It would appear that such heiresses - and presumably their powerful family connections - were not readily available among the impoverished élite in Thagaste.<sup>25</sup> But the right of a woman to inherit under Roman law created wealthy women throughout Roman history, also in Africa.<sup>26</sup> Corippus relates that during the middle of the 6<sup>th</sup> century, at a time when a plague took many lives, some women accrued much wealth by inheritance, an unnatural order of things which created this *mundus inversus*:

*et tamen ardor inops numquam satiatur avaris. / coniugiis calvere novis, viduasque potentes / accipiunt; nullis virgo quaesita maritis; / coniugis ob nummos defuncti quaeritur uxor, / virginibus dos parva datur; sic tempore diro / nulla maritales curavit reddere luctus.*

They [the avaricious] were on fire for grotesque unions, for marrying powerful widows, even as maidens received no bridegroom's proposal. The wife of a dead husband was sought after for her wealth but a maiden was given but a small dowry. And so, in that fearful time, no woman took care to pay the grief due to her husband.

[Ioh. 3.369-375]

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<sup>20</sup> Legislation introduced by Constantine created new prohibitions which prevented those of widely differing social standing from contracting a marriage (Nathan 2000: 59).

<sup>21</sup> We are told in the *Digest* [23.3.2] that 'It is in the state's interest for women to have their dowries, since because of them they are able to marry'. A woman's dowry was intended for her upkeep and it passed into her husband's management if she left her father's jurisdiction. In the case of divorce a husband would be expected to return the dowry to her family.

<sup>22</sup> TREGGIARI (1991a): *Roman marriage*, 344-347, contains comparative references to dowries during the Principate, ranging from over HS 1 000 000 for senatorial families (e.g. Tacitus considers a dowry of HS 1 000 000 [Ann. 2.86.2] as ample) to examples cited in the *Digest* of HS 100 000. See HS 1 000 000 [Martial 11.23.3-4]; HS 3 000 000 [Juvenal 6.137]. Some further figures given by SALLER (1994): *Patriarchy, property and death*, 212-215. The daughter of Apuleius' court opponent allegedly had a dowry of HS 400 000.

<sup>23</sup> See Chapter 8 for a more detailed discussion of Pudentilla's age and expectations of childbearing.

<sup>24</sup> Augustine's ambitions are revealed in the *Soliloquia* [1.10.17 - 1.11.19] and also *De Beata Vita* [1.4].

<sup>25</sup> In the more theoretical writings of Tertullian and Augustine there appears to be some confusion as to the purpose of marriage, even within a single writer's own works. Certainly the words 'increase and multiply' [Genesis 1.28] are not uppermost in their thoughts. Tertullian [*De An.* 30.4; *Ad Uxor.* 1.5.1] appears to feel along with Cyprian [*De Hab. Virg.* 28] that the world is already overpopulated and that to beget children should not be the primary aim of marriage. Augustine interprets children as spiritually necessary but not otherwise [*De Adult. Coniug.* 2.12.12 and *De Bono Coniug.* 33.3; 9.9; 17.19; *De Nupt. et Concup.* 1.15.17]. These thoughts do not of course necessarily reflect the social realities of the actions or even the thoughts of their fellow-Christians in Africa.

<sup>26</sup> This is discussed at greater length in Chapter 10.



'Public opinion', says Veyne, 'did not condemn fortune-hunting, but some ways of going about it were considered more praiseworthy than others' (1987: 150).<sup>27</sup> In his court defence Apuleius mentions that he is accused of marrying the widow Pudentilla for her money:

*... talem uxorem causa avaritiae concupisse atque adeo primo dotem in congressu grandem et uberem rapuisse...*

They have denounced me for desiring such a wife from motives of greed and robbing her of her vast and magnificent dowry at the very outset of our wedded life.

[*Apol.* 91.4]<sup>28</sup>

Thus, as Veyne points out, Apuleius' vehement defence would suggest that while fortune-hunting was not uncommon, it was something which could tarnish a man in public opinion.<sup>29</sup>

Although the material aspects of a marriage alliance receive much attention for studies of the wealthy élite, it follows that all propertied groups had these interests at heart, albeit on a smaller scale. Shaw (1982a: 89) records a few cases of intermarriage between families who wished to consolidate their adjacent property holdings in the area of Lamasba: the Dentilii and the Germanii and branches within the Marii family. From the evidence at Lamasba, Shaw finds proof for the generally held opinion that 'neighbours consolidate their interests in land and water by intermarriage' (1982a: 90). Quite a number of women<sup>30</sup> are accredited with land ownership, although there is no means of establishing whether they owned this land (by inheritance) or whether this was part of their dowry and managed by their husbands. Elsewhere Shaw (1987b: 38-39) mentions that kin and community endogamy, practised in the Eastern provinces as a means of ensuring that the property remained within the family, was not widely known in the African provinces,<sup>31</sup> noting that Augustine always had to explain such arrangements in Biblical texts at great length.

Initially the Vandals prohibited intermarriage between their own people and local inhabitants (Abun-Nasr 1971: 49), but in time:

ἔπειτα μέντοι τῇ τε κατὰ σφᾶς παιδοποιίᾳ καὶ ἄλλους βαρβάρους ἐταιρισάμενοι ἐς μεγάλην τινὰ πολυανθρωπίαν ἐχώρησαν.

However, after that time by their natural increase among themselves and by associating other barbarians with them they came to be an exceedingly numerous people.

[Procop., *De Bell. Vand.* 3.5.20]

There is certainly very little evidence for love-matches, but while property interests were the rule, there were also cases where this coincided with personal wishes, especially if it were not a first marriage or if the woman had gained emancipation from *tutela*. Thus Pudentilla was able to marry the man of her choice, Apuleius. This was not always as simple as it might appear, however, as the remarriage of widows often potentially threatened other interest groups.

Wealth and rank were not always the determinant in deciding whether a suitor was acceptable. Augustine gives

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<sup>27</sup> Thus Juvenal *cum te summoveant qui testamenta merentur / noctibus, in caelum quos evehit optima summi / nunc via processus, vetulae vesica beatae?* ('Today we are elbowed aside by men who earn legacies in bed, who rise to the top via that quickest, most popular route - the satisfied desires of some rich old matron.') [1.37-39].

<sup>28</sup> Also at *Apologia* 99.5; 101.3.

<sup>29</sup> Roman law also attempted in a general way to prevent Christian women from becoming vulnerable to men who were not of their status but who became familiar with them through the Church, for example as deacons [*Nov. Iust.* 117.15.1], but a law banning legacies to clergy and the Church [*Cod. Theod.* 16.2.27] was lifted within three months (Clark 1993: 55). See also below pp. 230-231 and 335.

<sup>30</sup> Germania Catula, Maria Satura, Maria Donatula, Iulia Victoria. The name Marius would imply a connection with the Gaetulians who were recruited for the *Legio III Augusta* (Shaw 1982a: 89). See further discussion on p. 249-250.

<sup>31</sup> See also the remarks in SALLER AND SHAW (1984b): 'Close-kin marriages in Roman society?'

one example where the orphaned daughter of a *vir spectabilis* had been entrusted by her father to the guardianship of the Church. From the early days of the Church such guardianship was seen as quite normal. When a marriage proposal was made by a pagan, Augustine refused [*Ep.* 254].<sup>32</sup> Tertullian also urged Christian women to marry Christian men of lower rank rather than pagans [*Ad Uxor.* 2.8.4].<sup>33</sup>

### Birth and social standing

In 1<sup>st</sup> century BC Rome Propertius [4.11.32] in his praise of Cornelia gives her three points of merit as an *exemplum* of Roman feminine virtue: her lineage, her children, and the fact that she had had only one husband.<sup>34</sup> Lineage or the status of the women's cognates was of importance only in terms of reputation, since technically she adopted her husband's status upon her marriage.<sup>35</sup> Ideally a marriage would take place between parties of equal status which was determined by their respective lineages. In the African context Perpetua is recorded as being *honeste nata* [*Passio P & F* 2.1] or 'nobly born' and here the emphasis falls specifically on her born status. Her family was probably from the decurial class of Thuburbo Minus and of some wealth and local standing.<sup>36</sup> Good birth was also considered important enough to mention on tombstones. It reflected positively on the commemorator, since it implied that the husband and hence the children were of equal status. Lineage is mentioned in a few epigraphical examples: from the Municipium Giufitanum, Pescennia Quodvul(t)deus was also an *h(onestae) m(emoriae) f(emina)... nata* (a woman born of the honestiores class) but her husband sees fit to mention that in addition she was *bonis natalibus* and *matronaliter nupta* (of good birth and married in the Roman tradition of the *iustae nuptiae*) [*CIL* 870]. In his poem in honour of the nuptials of the Goth Fridus, Luxorius also compliments the groom by mentioning the bride's 'mighty lineage' which makes her a suitable bride in his case:

*Cui genus a proavis ingens clarumque paternae  
Nomen inest virtutis et nota maior imago.*

Her lineage is mighty, her father's reputation for valour is renowned, her appearance is greater than usual.

[*Epithal.* 91.32-33]

Indigenous lineages are also found worth mentioning in a context where status is being advertised. Iulia Setina from Madauros, we are told [*ILAlg* I, 2240] was 'of noble birth and the glory of her race' (*excelso genere orta et gloria gentis*), while in another instance a Numidian aristocrat was turned into Roman citizen: 'Plancina, first lady of the Numidians, of royal stock' (*Numidarum prima mulierum | Plancina genera regio*) [*CIL* 16159].

The issue of birth and social standing is particularly visible in political marriages. A typical example of a small-

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<sup>32</sup> As mentioned above (p. 64), Augustine expresses his intention to give precedence to the wishes of the mother of the girl, who has, he says, not as yet come forward.

<sup>33</sup> See p. 82.

<sup>34</sup> Cornelia was probably the daughter of P. Cornelius Scipio (consul in 38 BC) and Scribonia (who was married to Augustus before Livia), and thus, as she is made to point out in the poem, she came from a family distinguished with honours on both sides (Lightman and Zeisel 1977: 21).

<sup>35</sup> This was not always the case, however. A number of examples are known of senatorial women who married men of lower status but retained the title of *clarissima femina*, for example Manlia Pudentilla [*AE* 1987: 1078; Thamugadi] who retained her title despite the fact that her second husband, L. Valerius Maximus, was not of the senatorial order. For other examples see *PFOS* I: 7-12.

<sup>36</sup> The family name of Vibius indicates some generations of Roman citizenship, probably, as BARNES (1971): *Tertullian. A historical and literary study*, 70, surmises, from a Vibius who was governor during the first half of the 1<sup>st</sup> century AD. The Vibii are mentioned in several instances by LASSÈRE (1977): *Ubique populus*, 254; 266; 287; 443; 445). Like SHAW (1993): 'The passion of Perpetua', 11 n.31, I can find no real support for Barnes' contention (1971: 70) that Perpetua might be of senatorial rank.



scale political marriage sealing a broader alliance of two groups is represented by the union between the rebel Stotzas, who retired to Mauretania with some of the Vandals, and the daughter of a local chieftain who allowed them to settle nearby [Procop., *De Bell. Vand.* 4.17.35]. By giving his daughter to the newcomer the local chieftain was acknowledging the status of Stotzas as more or less equal to his own. He would have a share in the future dynasty, should there be one.



FIGURE 6.2  
SILVER DENARIUS OF  
CLEOPATRA SELENE

These were of course small town politics compared to the dynastic issues surrounding the marriage between two royal dynasties from the African continent five and a half centuries earlier. This marriage joined Juba II, the son of Juba I. king of Numidia, and Cleopatra Selene, daughter of Cleopatra VII and Marc Antony.<sup>37</sup> Ironically both Juba and Cleopatra in their youth had walked in a Roman triumph, Juba in Caesar's in 46 BC, and Cleopatra in that of Octavian in 31 BC. After the death of her parents Cleopatra was taken up into the household of Octavian's sister and Marc Antony's first wife, and tutored together with her brothers by Nicolaus of Damascus [*FGrH* 2A 25.2]. Augustus eventually gave Cleopatra's hand to Juba [Dio 51.15.5], and together with her husband she ruled Numidia and later Mauretania as co-regent. The head and name of Cleopatra first appear on coins issued by Juba II in 20 BC together with his own, but soon Cleopatra came to issue her own coins as well.<sup>38</sup> While Juba's coins most commonly have Latin legends, those of Cleopatra are invariably in Greek, and where they share coinage Juba occupies the obverse with a Latin legend and Cleopatra the reverse in Greek.<sup>39</sup> Her own coinage bore the legend Βασίλισσα Κλεοπάτρα, and displayed the Nile crocodile<sup>40</sup> or images and associations of Isis. Macurdy (1937: 55) following Kahrstedt believes that there may have been some division of territory between Juba and Cleopatra and that she ruled as a queen in her own right, but there seems to be no solid evidence for this theory. At any rate it would appear that here we have a dynastic marriage in which the queen was well aware of her birth and her bloodline - she may even have thought it superior to that of Juba, as Macurdy implies (1932: 225), since the son she bore Juba was named Ptolemy in the tradition of the dynasty of her birth. But their dynasty was relatively short-lived. Ptolemy, who succeeded his father, was murdered by Caligula in AD 40, apparently for daring to wear the purple [Dio 59.25.1]. It would appear that

<sup>37</sup> All the evidence indicates that Juba II was completely loyal to Augustus, moved at the latter's whim from being a client king of Numidia to one of Mauretania [Tac., *Ann.* 4.5]. One would imagine that he had the same lack of say in the wife which Augustus arranged for him [Dio 51.15.5]. An epigram attributed to Crinagoras of Mitylene could possibly refer to the dynastic union, but GSELL (1928): *Histoire ancienne de l'Afrique du Nord*, 218, is probably right in being suspicious of the dynastic allusions referring to what were after all two subjects of the Roman Empire:

Ἀγχοῦροι μεγάλοι κόσμου χθόνες, ἃς διὰ Νεῖλος πιμπλάμενος μελάνων τέμνει ἀπ' Αἰθιοπῶν, ἀμφοτέραι βασιλῆας ἐκοινώσασθε γάμοισιν, ἐν γένος Αἰγύπτου καὶ Λιβύης θέμεναι. ἐκ πατέρων εἴη παισὶν πάλι τοῖσιν ἀνάκτων ἔμπεδον ἡπείροις σκῆπτρον ἐπ' ἀμφοτέραις.

Great lands of the earth, whose borders touch, which the Nile with waters swelling separates from the black Aethiopians, you have got sovereigns in common by marriage and you make one race of Egypt and Libya. From generation to generation may the sceptre pass from father to son, firmly established forever over both lands.

[*Anthol. Graec.* 9.235]

Gsell concludes that this epigram is more likely to refer to an earlier Ptolemaic marriage and written by another poet.

<sup>38</sup> The coinage of Juba II: Mazard (1955: 76-107); Falbe *et al* (1964: 103-108). Juba and Cleopatra: Mazard (1955: 108-120); Falbe *et al* (1964: 108-110); Cleopatra alone: Mazard (1955: 125); Falbe *et al* (1964: 110).

<sup>39</sup> Coins in her name continued to be issued until approximately AD11. It is possible, as GSELL (1928<sup>2</sup>): *Histoire ancienne de l'Afrique du Nord* Vol. 8, 220, maintains, that coins were still struck in her name after her death. Josephus [*Antiqu. Iud.* 16.10.7; *De Bello Iud.* 1.23; 24.2-3] claims that by this time Juba was already remarried to Glaphyra, daughter of Archelaus of Cappadocia.

<sup>40</sup> The Egyptian cult of the crocodile god Souchos had a large priestly class among whom women featured prominently (Hobson 1983: 313).



Cleopatra Selene passed some of her dynastic pride onto her son.

The most famous African dynasty after this is certainly that of Septimius Severus who went on to become emperor of Rome. Severus' first wife was Paccia Marciana, whom he married when he was 28 and had returned to Africa to take care of the estate of his recently deceased father.<sup>41</sup>

*uxorem tunc Marciam duxit, de qua tacuit in historia vitae privatae. Cui postea in imperio statuas conlocavit.*

It was then that he married Marcia, but of her he made no mention in the history of his life as a private man.

Afterwards, however, while emperor, he erected statues in her honour. [SHA: Sept. Sev. 3.2 and 14.4]

Spartianus later mentions [SHA: Sept. Sev. 18.6] that the purpose of Severus' autobiography was to accuse his rivals and clear his name of cruelty, so perhaps in this political context it is not so very surprising that Paccia Marciana is not mentioned. It is possible also that an emperor who was apparently ashamed of his sister's bad Latin would not mention a wife who would not be a credit to him in this respect, and Paccia Marciana, judging from her names, was probably of Libyan or Punic origin.<sup>42</sup> In erecting a statue to one's spouse it was often the aim of the dedicator that the act should reflect positively on himself, and it may be that, in time, Severus felt more secure in his new role, whatever period of time Spartianus may mean by *postea*. As the founder of a new dynasty Septimius seems to have been sensitive to criticism implying that he did not fit in - at any rate, like other founders of Roman dynasties, he made an effort to legitimize himself and his line by public imagery. He claimed descent from Marcus Aurelius who at the time when the adoption was declared (195) had been dead fifteen years [SHA: Sept. Sev. 10.6 and 12.8].<sup>43</sup> This fictitious pedigree was blandly promulgated even by the



FIGURE 6.3 A DYNASTIC DISPLAY: THE SEVERAN FAMILY ARCH AT LEPCIS MAGNA

<sup>41</sup> See CIL 19494 = ILS 440.

<sup>42</sup> Paccia Marciana's ancestors had probably derived citizenship from the 1<sup>st</sup> century proconsuls Marcius Barea and Paccius Africanus. Nothing about her relatives is known (Birley 1988<sup>2</sup>: 52), which could point to a lower level of Romanization. It does not seem likely that someone from a family of standing such as the Severii would have married a woman from a family which apparently had no local standing, but it is not impossible.

<sup>43</sup> BAHARAL (1989): 'Portraits of the emperor Septimius Severus' argues convincingly that even Severus' portraiture is executed in imitation of the portraits of Marcus Aurelius with whom Severus clearly wanted to emphasize links and thus legitimize his reign. It was



African provinces from cities in Mauretania Caesariensis [*CIL* 9317] to Severus' birth place Lepcis Magna [*IRT* 412-414].

Severus' own father, mother and grandfather were also honoured with statues at Severus' own expense on the same occasion as Paccia Marciana [14.4].<sup>44</sup> The continuation of his own imperial succession was however more grandiosely emphasized, for example on coinage and in the iconography of the arch at Lepcis Magna.<sup>45</sup> In Figure 6.3 above the presence of Julia Domna, the mother of his sons, to the left symbolizes the creation of a legitimate family and a future dynasty, at one and the same time legitimizing the past and promising a secure future.<sup>46</sup> Coins of the era also link domestic and imperial peace through this imagery [*RIC* IV Severus: 312]. These were concepts that were clearly familiar to the Roman African élite. Depictions of Julia Domna with her two sons were not intended to inspire other women to motherhood, but to reassure the subjects of the Empire of the continuation of their dynasty.

Dynastic marriages also occurred some centuries later under the Vandal rule of the royal clan of the Hasdingi. When Geiseric plundered the city of Rome and carried off Valentinian the third's wife Eudoxia and their two daughters, he married his son Huneric to one of them, Eudocia, who at the time was about 5 years old (Courtois 1955: 391-409).<sup>47</sup> The fact that Eudocia was Catholic and Huneric Arian seems not to have carried any weight in this alliance eventually forged by the respective fathers Geiseric and Valentinian, not to mention the fact that Huneric was already married to the daughter of the Visigoth king. The latter was disposed of, accused of treason and sent home by her father-in-law with her nose and ears cut off. Eudocia was more fortunate and eventually managed to elude her Vandal husband by fleeing to Jerusalem.

Women of ruling houses were married to cement political alliances, but as such their own wishes in the matter meant as little as they had in the time of Octavia's marriage to Antony. Some greater regard for safety was taken in the case of another dynastic bride who went to Africa, Amalafrida, the sister of the Ostrogoth Theodoric. She travelled to Carthage to meet her new husband Thrasamund accompanied by a bodyguard of one thousand of the notable Goths as well as 5 000 fighting men, described by Procopius as her *θεραπεία* or 'body of attendants'. In her case substantial land grants in Sicily were part of her dowry [Procop., *De Bell. Vand.* 3.8.12-13]. In the 7<sup>th</sup> century (on the eve of the Arab invasion of Septem on the Strait of Gibraltar) the ruler on the African side

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not unusual for Roman emperors to emphasize dynastic inevitability through a fictionalized likeness even when there was no biological connection.

<sup>44</sup> Adoptive emperors generally showed no interest in celebrating their natural mother, although sometimes natural fathers were given a token honour, for example in the case of Trajan, whose father featured on coinage, styled DIVUS PATER (*RIC* II Trajan: 251-252; 727, 762-764) (Dixon 1988: 195 n. 69).

<sup>45</sup> Imperial imagery of a fruitful and harmonious marriage sees its first broad public use with the Antonines (Fantham *et al* 1994: 357), which may also be a reason for its prominent use by the Severi. Public imagery to emphasize a new dynasty is familiar from the Ara Pietatis of AD 43, or from the sardonyx cameo depicting the genealogical connections on which the Julio-Claudian house based its legitimacy, including both the men and the women. In another example from the Cancellaria Reliefs (pictorial record of Domitian's life) the aging Vespasian places his right hand on Domitian's shoulder in an approving gesture that signifies the solidarity and continuity of the Flavian dynasty.

<sup>46</sup> Another aspect of this is pointed out by MCNAMARA (1987): 'Matres patriae/matres ecclesiae, women of the Roman Empire', 115: 'Throughout the history of the Roman Empire, each successful dynasty sought to obscure the brutal truth that its power rested upon its soldiers' arms by emphasizing the familial quality of monarchy'.

<sup>47</sup> The younger daughter, Placidia, was at the time engaged to be married to Anicius Olybrius at Rome. Geiseric respected this and sent her and her mother back to Constantinople (two of the sources, Evagrius' *Historia Ecclesiastica* [2.7] and Malalas' *Chronographia* [14.15.366] contradict each other about which daughter was the elder. Evagrius favours Eudocia as the elder, Malalas, Placidia).

was Julian.<sup>48</sup> Julian had similar ambitions of a dynastic alliance with Witiza (698-710) of Visigoth Spain, but reportedly broke off amicable relations because of the mistreatment of his daughter in the royal court of Toledo. Christides (2000: 49) is sceptical about the historical veracity of the account, however, and imputes the real cause to be the Africans' personal enmity towards the Spanish rulers. Thus it would seem that, even if rulers could put the personal attachment to their daughters above national interests, it is so unusual that no one credits it. Certainly using women as political pawns is much more common.

### **The idealization of fertility**

What will be discussed under this heading is simply the ideal of female fertility as one of the reasons for marriage. The ability of women to bear children was idealized because of its necessity to ensure succession, but although having children was seen as a virtue in the service of men, and husbands in particular, there were benefits for the mothers also, since a woman's status and authority increased once she had given birth, especially to male heirs. Women may have feared the high death rate of childbirth, but not as much as they feared sterility (which was usually seen as caused by the woman), which could even be a legitimate reason for divorce. As a further incentive to bear children Roman law from the time of Augustus advantaged a woman who had three or more children in that she could enjoy her father's inheritance without having to submit to a guardian's authority.<sup>49</sup>

Although it was often the expressed intention to marry for the procreation of children,<sup>50</sup> there was of course no guarantee that such good fortune should come to pass. Although the following epigram by Luxorius cannot be taken as the behaviour of the common man, there is no doubt that there was some urgency to having a son to carry on the family name:

*De eo qui uxorem prostare faciebat pro filiis habendis*

*Stirpe negata patrium nomen,  
Non pater, audis; carus adulter  
Coiugis castae viscera damnas,  
Pariat spurcos ut tibi natos,  
Inscia quo sint semine creti.*

*Fuerant forsitan ista ferenda  
Foeda, Proconi, vota parumper,  
Scire vel ipsam si tuus umquam  
Posset adultus dicere matrem.*

About a man who made his wife prostitute herself for the sake of having sons

Although you cannot sire children, you, without being a father, still hear yourself called a father. A beloved adulterer, you put the organs of your chaste wife to illicit use so that she may bear you basely born offspring, herself ignorant from what seed they have sprung. Perhaps these shameful pretensions of yours might have been bearable for a little while, Proconius, if ever your son when grown-up could say his mother herself knew.

[Epigr. 36]

Luxorius composed this satirical epigram as an indication of a man's desperation to have heirs who were theoretically legitimate, even if they were not biologically his own sons. In this Roman African society's attitudes were probably no different to what they had been in the 1<sup>st</sup> century BC. The importance of bearing offspring is of course not peculiar to the Romans - African tradition in fact boasts of having many wives for

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<sup>48</sup> The origins of Julian are uncertain. A number of references for this discussion are given by CHRISTIDES (2000): *Byzantine Libya and the march of the Arabs*, 49 n.190.

<sup>49</sup> These privileges are discussed more fully in Chapter 10.

<sup>50</sup> See for example the explicit wording to this effect in the dowry contract of Geminia Ianuarillis [*T. Alb.* 1].



guaranteeing just that [Sallust, *Bell. Jug.* 80.6-7].<sup>51</sup>

But when it comes to regulating women's sexuality and fertility the Roman African sources are more ambiguous than what we know of native African traditions. A woman is praised for the number of children she bears her husband (of which there are many examples in African epigraphy), attacked when there is a possibility of implying that her sexuality has strayed outside the *domus*, as Apuleius demonstrates when he attacks both the wife and daughter of Herennius Rufus in the *Apologia* [60; 75-76]. The importance of children from a marriage is definitely an issue for Apuleius himself, and the following euphoric description of the fertility of the African countryside as the 'best' place for his own wedding (as opposed to a wedding in town) is somewhat ironic, since Pudentilla was in all likelihood beyond the age of childbearing, although of course there are examples of women in their forties who bore children:

*Immo, si verum velis, uxor ad prolem multo auspicatius in villa quam in oppido ducitur, in solo uberi quam in loco sterili, in agri cespite quam in fori silice. Mater futura in ipso materno si<nu> nubat, in segete adulta, super fecundam glebam, vel enim sub ulmo marita cubet, in ipso gremio terrae matris, inter suboles herbarum et propagines vitium et arborum germina.*

Indeed, if you would know the truth, it is of far better omen for the expectation of offspring that one should marry one's wife in a country house in preference to the town, on rich soil in preference to barren ground, on the greensward of the meadow rather than the pavement of the market-place. She that would be a mother should marry in the very bosom of her mother, among the standing crops, on the fruitful plough land, or she should lie beneath the elm that weds the vine, on the very lap of mother earth, among the springing herbage, the trailing vine-shoots and the budding trees. [Apol. 88.4-5]

It is clearly the orator's aim to influence his audience's mental image of Pudentilla as a younger woman, who can still be identified with the idyllically fertile scene painted above.

At Thugga, Sabinia is praised for being *fecunda subolis* (fertile with offspring) [CIL 26673 = 1542 cf 15511; ILT 1448; CLE 1872], while another text commemorates Antonia Victoria, amongst her many other virtues, for being a woman *fecundae tecusae rarissimae* (exceptionally fertile in bearing (children))<sup>52</sup> [CIL 4692; ILAlg I 2239; ILS 8452]. Aurelia Mammosa is also claimed by her surviving spouse to have been *quae fecundo par/tu numerosa replet / casta domum trino pig/nore coniugii* / (who fertile with numerous offspring filled our chaste house three at a time as evidence of our marriage) [AE 1919, 46; ILAlg I 2242]. In none of the instances where the word *fecunda* is used are specific numbers given or whether they survived infancy. Other examples are more direct:

TAZEMBOUT (IN AURÈS)

[AE 1989, 896]

D(IS) M(ANIBUS) S(ACRUM) | C(AIUS) IUL(IUS) AUCTOR | UXORI MERIT(A)E | SERGIAE AMAR(AE), | QUI T(ITULUM) FECI, | QUAM | DUXI AN(NORUM) XVI | ET VIXIT MECU(M) | AN(NIS) XXI ET CREA(T) FILIOS VII ET | UNA(M) FEMINA(M) PER INSTAN(TIA(M) C(AII) IUL(II) MAR(TIALIS) FRATR(IS) MAIORIS.

Consecrated to the souls of the departed. Gaius Iulius Auctor, I who set up this inscription for my well-deserving wife Sergia Amara, whom I married at sixteen and who lived with me 21 years and bore seven sons and one daughter; at the insistence of Gaius Iulius Martialis elder brother

This 21 year marriage yielded seven sons and one daughter, although it is not known whether or not they survived their mother. In another case Pescennia Quodvultdeus is commemorated by her five children [CIL

<sup>51</sup> Sallust is quoted in full on p. 174. Precisely how this important role is given expression varies according to culture and period, as does the ideology associated with being a 'good mother', but this aspect will be discussed more fully under the heading of motherhood in Chapter 7.

<sup>52</sup> The adjective *tecusae* is derived from the Greek τίκτω meaning 'to bring into the world'. This aspect is emphasized by using both the Latin (*fecundae*) and the Greek derivative.



870], while Claudia Fortunata was the mother of twelve [CIL 17463; ILAlg I 130]. The special mention of these numbers is an indication that such large families were something to be held up to admiration in Africa.<sup>53</sup> They were certainly not that common in the ancient world generally (Eyben 1980/81: 5). A second inscription from Tazembout on the Roman frontier dated to the 3<sup>rd</sup> century attests to the 5 sons and 1 daughter of Sempronia Atilia, the products of three marriages, to judge by their names:<sup>54</sup>

TAZEMBOUT (IN AURÉS) [AE 1989, 897]  
D(IS) M(ANIBUS) S(ACRUM) | SEMPRONIA ATIL[IA] V(IXIT) A(NNOS) LV ME(N)SES IV | T(ITUS) MUSSIUS  
SATURNINUS | T(ITUS) MUSSIUS SABINUS | Q(UINTUS) SEMPRONIUS SATURN[INUS] | P(UBLIUS) ARRANIUS  
MARTILI[S] | P(UBLIUS) ARRANIUS DONAT[US] | SEMPRONIA P(UBLI) F(ILIA) ATIL[IA] | FILI(I) MATRI  
KAR(ISSIMAE) FE[C(ERUNT)]  
Consecrated to the souls of the departed. Sempronia Atilia lived 55 years four months. Titus Mussius Saturninus, Titus Mussius Sabinus, Quintus Sempronius Saturninus, Publius Arranius Martilis, Publius Arranius Donatus, her sons, and Sempronia Atilia daughter of Publius made this for their dear mother.

The frequency of divorce and widowhood made such accumulations quite common. All Sempronia Atilia's children seem to have maintained some sort of contact with their mother, despite the fact that Roman custom ordained that children accompanied the father in cases of divorce. It is likely that their fathers died, or in the case of divorce that the contact with the mother was maintained through geographical proximity. The fact that in all these examples so many of these women's children seem to have survived infancy is also remarkable. Fronto's remarks about his wife's difficulties in raising children to adulthood (five out of six (all daughters) died at an early age of disease) were more common in Roman antiquity (Lassère 1977: 471). Death in childbirth for both mother and/or child was a very real threat in antiquity. Inscriptions such as the following bear witness to women who may have sought divine aid in surviving the process of giving birth (Gardner and Wiedemann 1991:



FIGURE 6.4 TWO ROMAN AFRICAN DEITIES, PROTECTORS OF HEALTH AND CHILDBIRTH RESPECTIVELY

32):

LAMBÈSE (LAMBAESIS) [CIL 3695, ILS 3644]  
GENIO MITISSIMI AMANTISSIMI Q(UE) | CONIU(GIS) ET IUNONI SUAE  
| HORATIA Q(UINCTI) F(ILIA) ||| RIA FACIENDUM CURA L(UCII)  
SPELLATI SATURNINI  
To the most mild and loving Genius of her husband Lucius Spellatus Saturninus, and to her own Juno, Horatia, daughter of Quintus had this made.<sup>55</sup>

Augustine mockingly lists the vast array of pagan deities invoked to protect mother and child in 4<sup>th</sup> century Roman Africa [De Civ. Dei 4.11 and 6.9], a clear indication of the dangers of giving birth. The two deities pictured on the left, Macurgum and Vihinam (the latter clearly representing childbirth), were but two of many. The epitaph for Beccut [AE 1969/70, 658] (quoted in full below)<sup>56</sup> who died in childbirth also implicitly recognizes the high rate of infant mortality in the words *maternum nomen feci Lucinae fa/vore natum progenui nostro qui*

<sup>53</sup> It appears to be generally agreed among scholars (references in HOPKINS (1965b): 'Contraception in the Roman Empire') that small families were the norm in antiquity (referring to children who survived infancy), not least indicated by the story in Pliny's letters of a humble freedman who was showered with public attention because he had eight children, twenty-seven grandchildren and eighteen great grand children [NH 7.13/57, 59-60].

<sup>54</sup> Pliny [NH 7.5] singles out one Vistilia at Rome, remarkable for having had 7 children by 6 husbands.

<sup>55</sup> Translation by GARDNER AND WIEDEMANN (1991): *The Roman household, a sourcebook*, 32. Juno was the Roman goddess of childbirth.

<sup>56</sup> See p. 108 below.



*no/mine vivat* / ('By the favour of Lucina I have been given the name of mother. I have born a son, could he but live in my place'). The case of Rubria Festa, who gave birth ten times, left five surviving children and died in childbirth at the age of 36, was probably not uncommon [AE 1995, 1793].

The following excerpt from Fulgentius of Ruspe (late 5<sup>th</sup> century) emphasizes the pragmatic attitude to the death of the newborn:

*Quid sunt suggrundaria. Priori tempore suggrundaria antiqui dicebant sepulchra infantum, qui necdum XL dies implessant, quia nec busta dici poterant, quia ossa quae comberentur non erant, nec tanta immanitas cadaveris, quae locum tumesceret; unde et Rutilius Geminus in Astianactis tragoedia ait: 'Melius suggrundium miser quereris quam sepulchrum'.*

What suggrundaria are. In former times the ancients called suggrundaria the burial places of infants who had not yet lived 40 days, because they could not be called graves since there were no bones to be cremated nor a corpse big enough for a mound to be raised. As Rutilius Geminus says in his tragedy Astyanax: 'You would do better to look for an infant's burial place than a grave'. [Expos. Serm. Antiqu. 7]

### Family planning<sup>57</sup>

Despite these risks an element of calculation was present in having children. For the members of the élite it was often a matter of avoiding dissipating the family property among too many heirs, and for the poor it was the expense of bringing them up. Augustine tells us in one of his sermons that parents who had two or three children were afraid to have more in case the ones they already had would be reduced to beggary (*ne faciant alios mendicare*) [Serm. 57.2.2]. It is therefore not surprising that women who gave birth with the frequency of Claudia Fortunata [CIL 17463] (who bore twelve children), are the exception rather than the rule, also in the African provinces. A number of options to avoid unwanted children were practised in Roman Africa, but to what extent these measures were employed is impossible to determine from the evidence, since these were essentially matters handled by women and men seldom wrote about them. Caelius Aurelianus has left no information on the frequency of such practices. The views of the early Church fathers are interesting from the point of view that they reflect some current practices, though it is unlikely that their moralistic views or prescriptions were followed by even a substantial portion of their own congregation, given the number of times the Church Fathers have to repeat their message. Augustine notes carefully the different options to avoid pregnancy - contraception, sterilization and abortion - which must have been practised by women at all levels in his day.<sup>58</sup> In his *De Nuptiis et Concupiscentia* [1.15.17] the 'poisons of sterility' (*sterilitatis venena*) are mentioned as well as destroying the fetus in the womb.<sup>59</sup> As a Christian he rejects them all, as did Tertullian before him. Tertullian poured scorn on so-called virgins who attempted abortion:

*Scit Deus quot iam infantes et perfici et perducere ad partum integros iusserit debellatos aliquamdiu a matribus.*

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<sup>57</sup> The phenomenon generally is discussed by DICKEMANN (1979): 'Female infanticide, reproduction strategies and social stratification'. For antiquity a general survey of this aspect is given by EYBEN (1980/81): 'Family-planning in Graeco-Roman antiquity', GOUREVITCH (1984): *Le mal d'être femme*, 195-217, DICKISON (1973): 'Abortion in Antiquity' and FRENCH (1988): 'Birth control, childbirth and early childhood'. A more analytical approach is taken by HOPKINS (1965b): 'Contraception in the Roman Empire'. For more general perspectives on the social and legal aspects of the Roman family see SALLER (1984b): '*Familia, domus* and the Roman conception of the family', SALLER AND SHAW (1984a): 'Tombstones and Roman family relations in the Principate' and SHAW (1984a): 'Latin funerary epigraphy and family life in the Later Roman Empire' for Late Antiquity.

<sup>58</sup> For a discussion of Augustine's views on the subject see DOBROWSKI (1988): 'St Augustine, abortion and *libido crudelis*'. Minucius Felix also mentions abortion and child exposure [Oct. 30.3], as does Tertullian [Ad Nat. 1.16] when he says that the law most often transgressed is the one against child exposure (*expositio*).

<sup>59</sup> Ancient non-medical writings do not always distinguish clearly between contraception and abortion (Hopkins 1965b: 136-137), which is probably why Soranus found it necessary to distinguish between the two [Gyn. 1.19.60].



*Facillime semper concipiunt et felicissime pariunt huiusmodi virgines et quidem simillimos patribus.*

God knows how many infants He has helped to perfection and through gestation until they were born sound and whole, after being long fought against by their mothers! Such virgins always conceive with the readiest ease, and have the happiest deliveries, and the children look like their fathers. [Virg. Vel. 15.3]

Both authors, together with medical writers of the time, found abortion justified if the life of the mother were in danger [Tert., *De An.* 25.4-6; Aug., *Enchir. de Fide, Spe et Car.* 23.86; Soranus, *Gyn.* 4.3.9].<sup>60</sup> By law abortion was declared 'an offence against both husband and fatherland' under the Severi and abortionists could even be executed if the woman died [*Dig.* 48.19.38.5; Paul, *Sent.* 5.23.14] (Veyne 1987: 164).<sup>61</sup> Children who were accepted by their father were officially registered [Apul., *Apol.* 89.2] according to Roman tradition, but those rejected could be killed (particularly if they were maimed in some way)<sup>62</sup> or exposed. Child exposure appears to have been an accepted if not necessarily a common practice in Africa.<sup>63</sup> Augustine refers to it<sup>64</sup> but is less critical of it than of abortion, or even of the act of having sexual relations without the specific purpose of procreation, for example by using contraceptive methods (Dobrowski 1988: 155).<sup>65</sup> Exposure was of course an action ordered or at least sanctioned by the father, whereas abortion was viewed with suspicion because of its association with adultery and otherwise because a woman was single-handedly deciding the fate of a man's legitimate children. Roman law only expressed a general ban on 'killing' a child by making it a capital offence in AD 374, but the act of exposure is not specifically mentioned [*Cod. Theod.* 9.14.1].

## THE ACT OF MARRIAGE

In Roman tradition the marriage act was a private matter in the sense that it was transacted without the sanction of state or religion. An indirect definition of a legitimate marriage is given in the *Metamorphoses*, when Venus is made to say:

*Quamquam inepta ego frustra filium dicam: impares enim nuptiae, et praetera in villa sine testibus, et patre non consentiente factae legitimae non possunt fideri, ac per hoc spurius iste nascetur ....*

But I am a fool to term him by the name of a son, since as the marriage was made between unequal persons, in no town, without witnesses and not by the consent of their parents, therefore the marriage is illegitimate, and the child that shall be born a bastard .... [Metam. 6.9]

Four elements are therefore noted here: the status of the two parties, the locality of the wedding, the witnesses and parental consent. These are the elements which would be of greatest importance for the propertied classes. The status and parental involvement have already been discussed. It is the two remaining elements which are more narrowly concerned with the marriage ceremony itself. Witnesses were normally present at the ceremony for the purposes of sealing the contract pertaining to the dowry, the *tabellae matrimoniales*, as described by

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<sup>60</sup> In which event the child would be born under the cloud of matricide.

<sup>61</sup> The measure was interpreted as a woman depriving her husband of legitimate offspring, an offence for which she was punishable. Under Justinian this act became a valid reason for divorce (Eyben 1980/81: 28-29).

<sup>62</sup> For strangulation of children at birth, see Tertullian, *Apologet.* [9.7]; Minucius Felix, *Oct.* [30.2].

<sup>63</sup> EYBEN (1980/81): 'Family-planning', 76, points to three reasons why exposure might have been the preferred option to abortion: it caused less danger to the mother, it enabled the parents to choose the sex of their children, and it gave the infant at least a chance of survival. As argued by GARNSEY (1991): 'Child rearing in ancient Italy', 50, abandonment is not a form of infanticide since there was a reasonable survival rate of the abandoned.

<sup>64</sup> *Ep.* 98 [23]: *aliquando etiam quos crudeliter parentes exposuerunt*. 'Sometimes even children who have been cruelly exposed by their parents ...'; also at *De Nupt. et Concup.* 1.15.17.

<sup>65</sup> Augustine advises wives to tell their husbands to visit prostitutes rather than defile the marriage bed by indulging in mere lust [*De Bono Coniug.* 1.1].



Apuleius [*Apol.* 67, 88].<sup>66</sup> The importance given to legitimate marriage (often because it indicated a transition to freed status which made marriage possible) is indicated by the way it is illustrated on funeral reliefs by the husband holding the scroll of the marriage contract, or by the *dextrarum iunctio*, the latter potentially indicated in the sarcophagus relief below (Figure 6.5), at least by the inference of Fournet-Pilipenko (1961-62: 94), since the relief is unfortunately damaged in this respect.

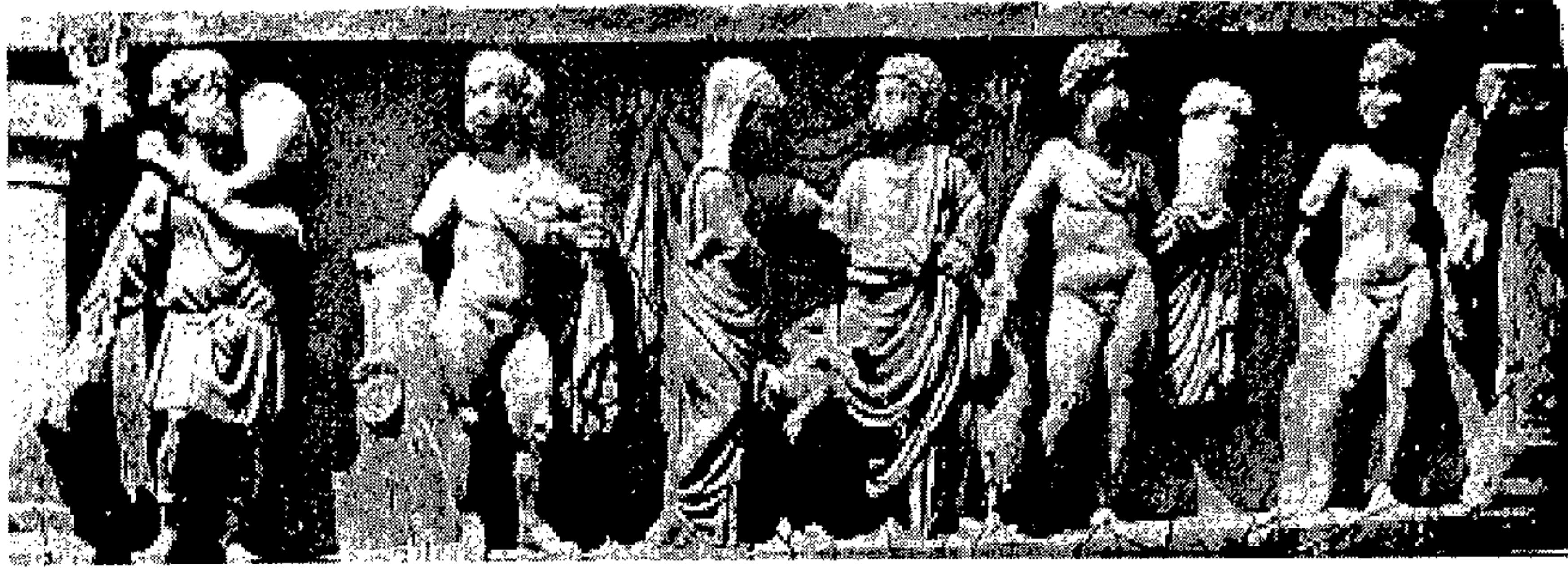


FIGURE 6.5 A MARRIED COUPLE AND THE SEASONS

In themselves the financial arrangements did not on their own constitute a marriage. In the case of Pudentilla she had made *tabulae nuptiales* with Sicinius Clarus, but had managed to avoid the actual marriage [*Apol.* 68.5]. Cohabitation for the purposes of having children seems to have been a nearer definition, as stipulated in the dowry contract of Geminia Ianuarillis (*sponsae simul cum Iuliano | [inf]antium sponsum procreandorum*, 'betrothed to Iulianus for the begetting of children by him') [*T.Alb* 1].

At weddings general festivities were the norm. In the marriage ceremony described by Apuleius in his *Metamorphoses* there are a large number of guests and *domus tota lauris obsita, taedis lucida constrepebat hymenaeum* ('the house was decorated with laurel, and torches set everywhere as they chanted in Hymenaeus' honour'), while the prospective bridegroom sacrificed at temples on his way to the ceremony [4.26].<sup>67</sup> From the inscription quoted below, references to the nuptial torches and marriage hymns would indicate that even for this 3<sup>rd</sup> century woman, who like her husband bears a Punic name, Roman rites prevailed:

MAKTAR (MACTARIS) [AE 1969/70, 658]  
D(IS) M(ANIBUS) S(ACRUM) | BECCUT IAM PRI | MUM ILIONI CONIUNCTA MA | RITO VIRGO RUDIS TENERA QUO  
ME | FORTUNA REDUXIT | VITAE SET LETI SEDES FATAT TULERE | HIC HYMNO TEDAQ(UE) SIMUL CONTECTA  
| RESIDI | VIXI DUM LICUIT MORUM SINE LABE PUDICA | MATERNUM NOMEN FECI LUCINAE FA | VORE NATUM  
PROGENUI NOSTRO QUI NO | MINE VIVAT | NEC FLEAT HOC NIMIUM CUI SUM CARISSIMA | CORDI COMMUNE  
EST HOMINEM FUNEBREM | [QU]ERELA M... | [...]EIA[...] | [...]RISSIMA PIA VIXIT ANNIS XV[...] EUTHESIA<sup>68</sup>  
Consecrated to the souls of the departed. I, Beccut, an innocent young virgin, first joined to my husband Ilio,  
where Fortune had led me in life, but also in death, as the fates ordained. There I was at the same time celebrated

<sup>66</sup> For a concise summary of the business/ strategic aspects of Roman marriage, that is, family, money and political alliances, see BÉNABOU (1990): 'Pratique matrimoniale et représentation philosophique', 124-127. For more detailed discussions, SALLER (1994): *Patriarchy, property and death*, TREGGIARI (1991a): *Roman marriage* and RAWSON (1986): *The family in ancient Rome*. Only from the 8<sup>th</sup> century in Byzantium did marriage become a religious act which required the sanction of the Church.

<sup>67</sup> In ridiculing the anthropomorphism of pagan deities Arnobius of Sicca [*Adv. Nat.* 4.20] asks whether gods, like mortals, celebrate marriage with large crowds of festive attendants.

<sup>68</sup> Many references in this inscription relate to the cult of Isis or possibly Bacchus, an aspect which is taken up in Chapter 12.



by the marriage song and by the nuptial torch preceding me. Now I rest at the same time covered by a tomb and an urn. I have lived as much as has been permitted, chaste in a way of life without blemish. By the favour of Lucina I have been given the name of mother. I have borne a son, could he but live in my place, and may he not weep too much, by whose heart I am so much loved. It is the condition of men to bewail death...lived ...years. Euthesia.

The inscription contains other references to a Roman context, firstly the urns for the ashes, the reference to Lucina (= Juno Lucina), the Roman goddess of birth,<sup>69</sup> and the mention of chastity are further proof of a wish to appear Romanized. One of Luxorius' epigrams [*Epigr.* 51] dating to the 5<sup>th</sup> century has a mixture of references to both Greek and Roman customs relating to weddings. The poet is commenting sarcastically on the eagerness of one Hermes to be a wedding attendant where in fact he is an informer.<sup>70</sup> The Greek tradition is represented in the term *paranympheus* (attendant), a friend of the groom who accompanied the married couple on the bride's journey to her new home. There was no real parallel in the Roman tradition. The Roman reference consists of the masculine form of the *pronuba* (who was traditionally in charge of the bride for the wedding arrangements) - the masculine form is seen less often and only in late Latin (Rosenblum 1961: 217 n.2). Presumably he performed the same function for the groom which the *pronuba* did for the bride.<sup>71</sup> If 'Hermes' is the type of informer Rosenblum suspects, the poem implies a fairly high frequency of public betrothal and wedding ceremonies and a display of wealth.

The absence of general festivities could even give rise to speculation or comment if the individuals involved were prominent members of society, as in the case of Pudentilla and Apuleius. Their wedding took place on her estate and where no-one, not even close kin, was invited [*Apol.* 87]. Apuleius ascribes this to the fact that Pudentilla wanted to avoid the obligations of holding a wedding in town, since she had recently disbursed the sum of HS 50 000 for the wedding of her son,<sup>72</sup> and also to escape the attendant obligation of having to go to further celebrations in the days which followed [*Apol.* 87]. He clearly feels a need to defend this type of 'quiet' marriage since this now seems (in the light of the accusations against him) to have been secretive for an ulterior motive of his own. Such weddings were probably not entirely unusual, and certainly the motivations of avoidance of attendant public munificence was something which we see increasingly towards the end of the 3<sup>rd</sup> century.

After these festivities the procession led the bride to her new home, as described in the *Metamorphoses* [4.34-35], where a number of rituals ruled the consummation of the union. Some of these rituals are also mentioned by the 4<sup>th</sup> century Christian writer Arnobius of Sicca [*Adv. Nat.* 3.25], but with some scorn, relating how superstition made brides smear the doorposts of their husbands' homes with greasy ointment, and how the bridegrooms, aglow with passion, had to unloosen the maiden's bonds, for else the gods (who existed because

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<sup>69</sup> The antecedents of this goddess traditionally go back a long way. In ancient Rome parents blessed with the birth of a child would deposit a coin at the temple of Juno Lucina in Rome as a way for the Kings to keep a census of the number of children born during the year (French 1988: 1358). Arnobius of Sicca in the late 3<sup>rd</sup> century AD still mentions women imploring the aid of Juno Lucina in childbirth [*Adv. Nat.* 3.10].

<sup>70</sup> ROSENBLUM (1961): *Luxorius, a Latin poet among the Vandals*, 217, speculates that he may have 'informed' the Vandal tax officials of the wealth that he saw displayed at the wedding feast (see p. 41 above on the Vandal kings and taxation), or other family secrets. The name 'Hermes' was presumably chosen here because the god Hermes was also the patron of thieves.

<sup>71</sup> On the role of the *pronuba* in Roman Africa, see p.126.

<sup>72</sup> For a retirement from town life for the same reasons see Pliny, *Ep.* 10.116-117.



of these fears) would be without names). However, Christian marriage ceremonies in Roman Africa at first do not seem to have diverged widely from these outward forms. The signing of the contracts remained crucial even in Christian marriages, but in time the husband-to-be also contributed in the way of a gift to the bride, the *arrhae sponsaliciae*, intended to be the equivalent of the dowry in value.<sup>73</sup> Augustine gives examples of what such gifts consisted of, including horses and land - even families of modest means considered this normal [*Enarr. in Ps.* 55.17, 84.2; *In Ioh. Ev. Tract.* 2.4]. Another innovation followed on a canon from the Fourth Synod at Carthage (398, canon 13), which ordained that parents should present their children at marriage for the blessing of the priest, and that they should wait in consummating the marriage on the wedding night out of deference for this blessing. But for the most part the Christian Church was more concerned with the status of matrimony and introducing laws to discourage divorce and remarriage. Wedding festivities remained popular, even though by Cyprian's description they were no place for innocent virgins because of the 'disgraceful talk and drunken feasts' (*verba turpia et temulenta convivia*) [*De Hab. Virg.* 18], and by the time of the Byzantine recovery of Africa weddings usually took place on Sundays, when they took on the 'air of a village festival', with friends and relatives feasting and dancing (Charanis 1973b: 63). The Vandal aristocracy, with their apparent taste for luxury, also celebrated weddings with ostentation and pomp, as in the case of Fridus the Goth, to whom Luxorius dedicates the lengthy *epithalamium* [91] describing the marriage ceremony.

### THE IDEAL STATE OF MARRIAGE

Marriage as it was advertized on tombstones was very much the product of contemporary ideology, but it is a moot point whether or not this had any bearing on social reality. During the time of the Empire the Romans came to project the ideal marriage as one without quarrel and where the partners had mutual respect and understanding, one which exhibited what Apuleius calls *concordia coniugii et muro amore* [*Apol.* 42]. These were feelings which would ideally develop during marriage, even if they were not a precondition for it. The fact that these sentiments are increasingly advertised on tombstones are an indication of the extent to which they became part of a Roman ideal, both for the élite classes of the empire and people of humbler status. Veyne (1978) sees the end of the competition for political honours (with the ascendancy of one man in politics) as crucial in the development of affectionate family relations among the Roman élite, since this caused men to look inward to their families rather than outward for a political career.<sup>74</sup> Other modern scholars (for example Foucault (1985/6), Bénabou (1990)) ascribe this new and more sentimental view of marriage (as a partnership rather than a commercial merger) to the influence of Stoicism,<sup>75</sup> but perhaps both the taste for Stoicism and the new view of marriage among the élite were the result of a larger social trend towards greater individualism and a desire for personal fulfilment, which would also in part explain the higher divorce rate from this period

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<sup>73</sup> SHAW (1987b): 'The family in late Antiquity', 37 n.146, points out that the word *arrhae* is Semitic; the custom probably reached Africa via Constantinople.

<sup>74</sup> A view challenged by SALLER AND SHAW (1984a): 'Close kin marriage in Roman society?', 135, who cite examples of family affection in the Late Republic and conversely to examples of political marriages in the Empire. VEYNE (1987): *History of private life*, under the influence of Foucault favoured the theory of the influence of Stoicism.

<sup>75</sup> The word *amicitia* specifically is not used anywhere in the context of marriage (Dixon 1992a), but a type of friendship is often implied. See the discussion on the concept as expressed in Roman elegy in OLIENSIS (1997): 'Erotics of amicitia'. Other examples of a more sentimental attitude to marital relationships: Lucretius, 3.894-896; Val. Max., 5.7; App., *Bell. Civ.* 4.3.12ff.



onwards (Dixon 1988: 25).<sup>76</sup> It is also possible that this ideal of the husband and wife in marital harmony developed to counter the potentially disruptive effects of *sine manu* marriages, where husband and wife were seen as distinct economic entities, and which had become increasingly common from late Republic and early Empire onwards. Tacitus [*Ann.* 3.33-34] reports on a debate in the Senate which took place during the reign of Tiberius as to whether wives should accompany their governor husbands to the colonies (conventionally women were banned from anything political or military). The upshot of the debate is that a wife would lend her husband moral support and strengthen his position. From the early Principate onwards wives and sometimes also their children accompanied senior officials during their years of service in the provinces (Marshall 1975). Whatever the reason for this change of image to a marriage of companionship rather than a marriage of convenience, one must be cautious in taking the encomia on tombstones at face value, particularly since these changes coincided with a substantial increase in the divorce rate among the privileged status groups (Dixon 1988: 25).<sup>77</sup>

In the African context idyllic marriages are occasionally mentioned - Aurelia Mnesithea,<sup>78</sup> for example, regrets the passing of her husband with whom she had lived *sine lite* (without quarrel) [*CIL* 7228; *CLE* 561; *ILAlg* II 829]. The harmony of a married couple is sometimes described at great length:

MDAOUROUCH (MADAUROS)

[*ILAlg* I 2240; *CLE* 218]

D(IS) M(ANIBUS) S(ACRUM) | CONCORDES ANIMAE QUON|DAM CUM VITA MANERET | MORIBUS EXIMI(I)S  
PARILES ET AMO|RE IUGALI SEDIBUS HIS IUNCTAE | PER SAECULA ONGA QUIESCUNT NAM BONUS HEU  
MARCUS GENERIS | FASTIGIA REDDENS AEMILIUS | PRIMUS FLAVIANUS NOMINE | POLLENS CUM QUATTUOR  
DECIMOS COMPLESSET NOBILIS ANNOS | TERTIUS HUIC POST HOS FINEM DE|DIT ANNUS INICUS. POST CUIUS  
LETUM | DULCI VIDUATA MARITO CONIUX | CASTA SUUM PER SE SOLATA LABO|REM IULIA FEMINEIS  
EXEM|PLAR MORIBUS OMNE SETI|NA EXCELSO GENERE ORTA ET GLO|RIA GENTIS HIC SITA SED SEDES |  
MERUIT PENETRARE PIORUM | ELYSIOS CELEBRAT CARO CON|IUNCTA MARITO SEXIER HU|IC DECIMUM  
SPATIUM COMPLEVE|RAT ANNUS HAEC MOMIMENTA | AEVI POSUERUNT MUNERE NATI | AEMILI, AQUILI[N]US  
PIETATE ET BAR|BARUS [ET NUNC EXSEQUIAS] IBI SOLLEMNI DE MORE FRE|[QUENTANT] H(IC) S(ITI) S(UNT)  
Consecrated to the souls of the departed. Souls which all their life were always in accord alike in their outstanding conduct and conjugal love rest here for eternity. But alas! Marcus Aemilius Primus Flavianus, of noble rank (nobilis), restoring dignity to his family, powerful in name, having completed four times ten years, in the third year an evil year brought his demise. After his death his wife, widowed from her gentle husband, found consolation for her grief in her chastity and solitude. She was called Iulia Setina, an example of womanly conduct, of noble birth and the glory of her race, rests here. She deserves to penetrate to the seat of pious souls. With her dear spouse she enjoys the Elysian fields. She has completed a span of six times ten years. This monument was erected by their sons, Aemilius Aquilinus and Aemilius Barbarus. And here a funeral procession where the customary solemnities are celebrated. Here they rest.

People with lesser means expressed essentially the same sentiments more simply, and Telesinus in fact says as much:

ROUTILIA HENCHIR (BETWEEN SBEITLA + KASSERINE)

[*ILAFRIC* 115; *ILT* 348; *CLE* 348]

... HIC CORP(US) OB | INSIGNEM EIUS PUCI|CITIAM TELESINUS MAR(ITUS) | CARO DEVINCTUS A|MORE UT  
POTUIT PO|TIUS QUAM UT VOLU|IT POSUIT

Here Telesinus has buried the body of his wife; a husband devoted to a dear love, on account of her remarkable virtue, has built this according to his means rather than according to what he would have wished.

A similar sentiment is expressed in a tomb relief of husband and wife (Figure 6.6 overleaf). Traditionally in

<sup>76</sup> SHAW (1991a): 'The cultural meaning of death: age and gender in the Roman family', argues against Christian influence as the reason for the increased value given to marriage in Late Antiquity in favour of a more complex set of influences in social developments of which Christianity is but one.

<sup>77</sup> LADJIMI-SEBAÏ (1977): *La femme en Afrique à l'époque romaine*, 308, tends to take the wording of inscriptions very literally and concludes that such a thing as gender equality existed in antiquity: 'Il s'agit d'un véritable couple au sens moderne du terme'.

<sup>78</sup> See p. 164 for full quotation of the text.



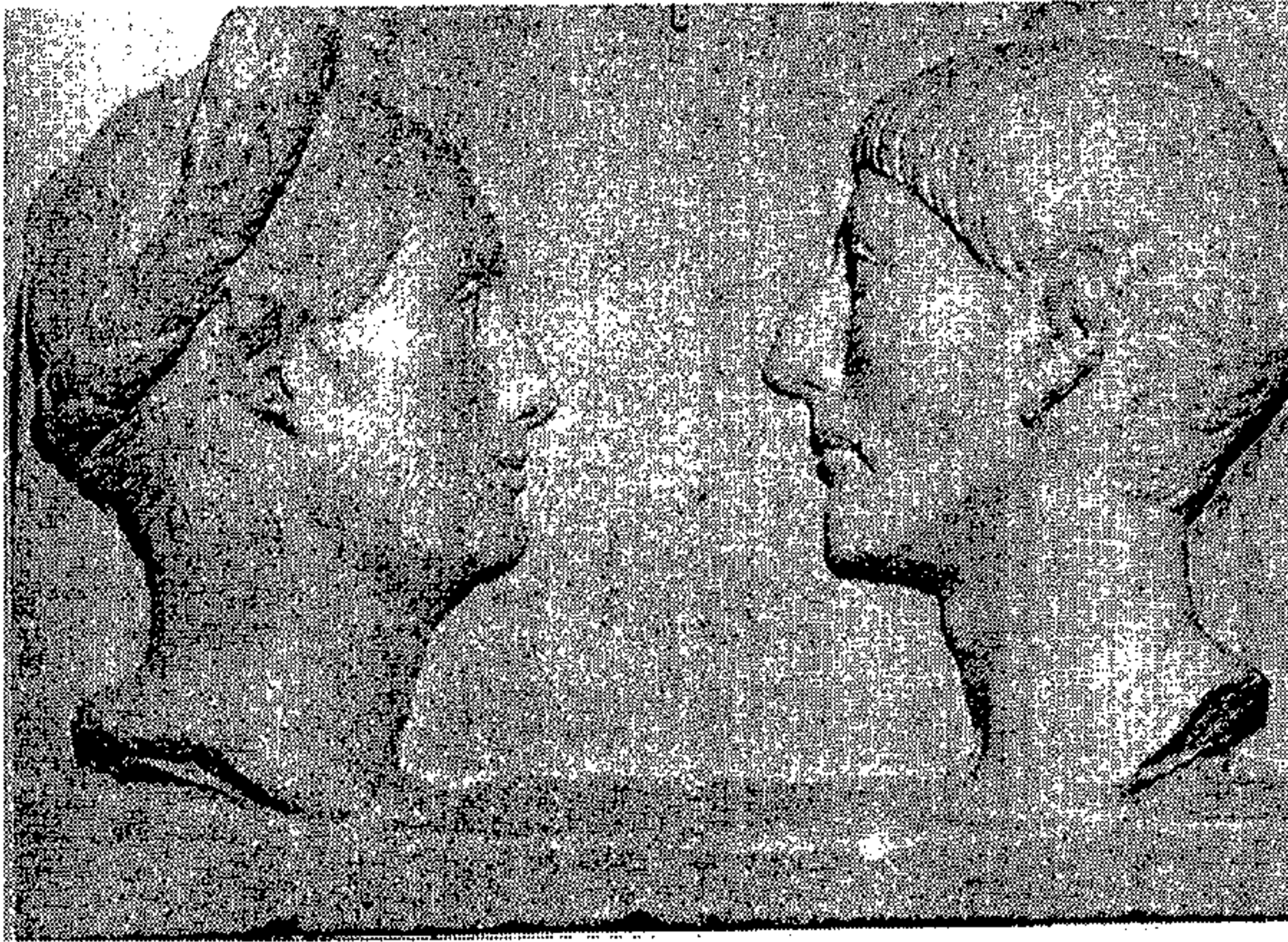


FIGURE 6.6 UNKNOWN MARRIED COUPLE

common. A few other examples of couples in funerary reliefs can be seen at the end of Chapter 7.



FIGURE 6.7 NEO-PUNIC HUSBAND AND WIFE

The concept of the husband and wife as *socii* and companions in life - and even death - is also expressed on tombstones, as for example:

NATTABUTES [CIL 10828; CLE 110]  
D(IS) M(ANIBUS) S(ACRUM) | GABINIAE MATRO | NAE COMITI  
DE | FUNCTAE SORS | ET FORTUNA IM | PROBA QUAE DUM | PER  
ANNOS BIS | XVIII VITA(M) GERIT | NON UT MERUIT VITA |  
FUNCTA EST SUBITO | ET CONSCIUS AE | TER H(IC) S(ITA) B(ENE)



FIGURE 6.8 ROMAN HUSBAND AND WIFE FROM AQUILEIA

<sup>79</sup> Indigenous African art is virtually non-existent in the historical period - at most possible influences can be traced in later Punic and Roman art (Charles-Picard 1959: 323).

<sup>80</sup> Portraits of married couples tend to portray them facing the viewer, side by side. A large array of this type of funerary *stelae* can be viewed in BRILLIANT (1963): *Gesture and rank in Roman art*, 44-54. In an aureus minted in AD 54, Nero's mother Agrippina faces her son in a profile portrait similar to our image here, and this is usually interpreted as an indication of Agrippina's dominance over her young son, since in the aureus of 55 Nero fills the foreground while his mother is profiled behind him, after which Agrippina disappeared from the coinage and was eventually forced into retirement before her murder four years later. It is therefore also possible that the image in Figure 6.6 is an example of an assertive wife, since this may not be as negative a concept as the Agrippina example implies.



Q(UIESCAT).

Consecrated to the souls of the departed. To Gabinia Matrona, deceased companion. Fate and wilful fortune. She who lived twice eight years. This is not what she deserved, to leave life so suddenly and with the complicity of Eternity. Here she rests in peace.

The same sentiments are elaborately expressed by the imperial slave Nicodromus in the following epitaph:

CARTHAGE

[CIL 12792 & P. 2459; CLE 1187; ILT 906]

DIS MANIB(US) SACRUM | MINUCIAE PRIMAE | QUAE  
VIXIT ANNIS | XXVI | NICODROMUS AUG(USTI  
SERVUS) PIAE | ET BENE MERENTI CONIUGI | FECIT

D(IIS) M(ANIBUS) SAC(RUM) | MICINIAE PRIMAE QUAE  
VIXIT | ANNIS XXVI NICODROMUS AUG(USTI SERVUS)  
| PIAE ET BENE MERENTI UXORI FECIT | PRIMA AETATE  
TUA RAPTA ES, KARISSIMA CONIUNX | ANNIS BIS  
DENIS ET SEX TIBI VITA PROBATA EST | ROMA TIBI  
GENUS EST FATUM FUT UT LIBYS ESSES | DUCERIS  
AD STYGIAM NUNC MISERANDA RATEM | INQUE TUO  
TRISTIS VERSATUR PECTORE LETHE | UT NON  
COGNOSCAS ME MISERANDA PIUM | MUNUS ERAT  
FORTUNA TUUM SERVARE PUDICAM | ET POTERAS  
AMBOS IT ALIAE DARE TU | A MULTIS FLETU  
RENOVAVAS, O BONA, SIMPLEX | CUM TE IN  
CONSPECTU NON HABEAM COMITEM.

Consecrated to the souls of the departed. For Minicia Prima, who lived 26 years. Nicodromus, slave of Augustus, made this for his dutiful and well-deserving wife. You have been taken in your first youth, my dear wife. You have lived the six and twenty years of your life with integrity. Rome was your race, fate ordained that you become African. Alas, now you are led towards the boat on the Styx, and there the sad Lethe now courses through your breast, so that you will no longer remember me, who observes your memory. It was your task, Fortune, to keep alive such virtue, and it is within your power to return both of us to Italy. With the tears of many you, so good and so guileless, will be refreshed. With you in my sight I could not want for a better companion.

This last tombstone clearly indicates that elaborate memorials were often erected by aspirants to higher status groups. Poetic expressions of love are not particularly rare in the Roman African context, even for this status group:

CONSTANTINE (CIRTA)

[CIL 7427; ILALG II 1244; CLE 1288]

D(IS) M(ANIBUS) | SITITIAE SPEN[?] ? | QUISQUIS A | MAT CONIUNX | HOC EXEMPLO CON | IUGAT AMORE | EST  
AUTEM VITAE DULCE | SOLACIOLUM HAEC | ABIT AD SUPEROS CUM | FILIO EPISUCO KARISSI | MO NOSTRO  
VIXIT | AN(NIS) LVII H(IC) S(ITA)

Consecrated to the souls of the departed. For Sittia Spes. That the spouse who loves by this example joins to love. Love is the sweet solace of life. She has been given to the home of the gods together with our dear son, Episucus. She lived 57 years. Here she rests.

A marriage of a certain duration was sometimes given as proof of the idyllic marital harmony:

SIGUS

[CIL 5798; ILS 8447; ILALG II 6610]

D(IS) M(ANIBUS) S(ACRUM) | MEMORIAE GARGILORU[M] | IULIAE ROGA | TAE CONIUGI | UNO ANIMO | UNO  
CONSILI | O SEMPER | FRUITA ME | CUM ANNIS | XL V(IXIT) A(NNIS) LV | O(SSA) E(I) B(ENE) Q(UIESCANT)

Consecrated to the souls of the departed. To the memory of Iulia Rogata of the Gargilii, my wife, one spirit, one mind, who enjoyed all the 40 years with me. She lived 55 years. May her bones rest in peace.

Here a marriage of 'one spirit, one mind' lasted 40 years, but the fact that the length of a marriage is so often mentioned in an obviously idealised context makes the actual number of years of union unreliable for demographic studies, since in matters of self-advertisement the truth may sometimes be embellished.<sup>81</sup> There are numerous examples of such inscriptions (although the number of years of marriage is not always as high as the 40 cited above)<sup>82</sup> of which one has already been mentioned (*AE* 1994, 1903) in another context. Sometimes,

<sup>81</sup> Besides this Roman Africans seem to have had a rather ambivalent attitude to age representation (see Chapter 8).

<sup>82</sup> On their number and the use for demography see HOPKINS (1965a): 'The age of Roman girls at marriage' and SHAW (1987a): 'The age of Roman girls at marriage: some reconsiderations'.



in fact, a marriage was claimed to have been so good that the surviving spouse did not want to live without the other, as in the case of Iulia Setina and her husband Marcus Aemilius Primus Flavianus.<sup>83</sup> In *CIL* 27380 husband and wife share a common grave, 'evidence of their common love - even death could not separate them for long, cruel death, who alone can separate lovers' (*testantur quam concor / des exegerint aevom / quos nec mors potuit / seiungere longe, / crudelis quae sola potest / disiu(n)gere amantes*).<sup>84</sup> Marcus Motasius from Agbia felt the spiritual presence of his wife Arinia Citoria even after her death, and wanted to be buried in the same grave [*CIL* 1557 (cf 15554) = *ILS* 8446 = *ILT* 1532]. The death of Sabinia below is also ascribed to the fact that she no longer wished to live without him:

DOUGGA (THUGGA)

[*CIL* 26673 = 1542 cf. 15511; *ILT* 1448; *CLE* 1872]

HAEC EST SABIN[IA] NOM[INA] TA LAUDE OMNIB(US) ET PR[AE] DICATA REB(US) CUNCTIS Q[UIBUS]  
PROBANTUR FEMINAE: VERA SANCTA PRUDEN[S] FECUNDA SUBOLIS OPT[IM]A M(A)E QUOD PROB[AB]E[E] RAT  
ETIAM IN SUPREMI[S] MERUIT DE DEIS, UT MOX POST MARITUM QUEM SOLUM NORAT VITA EX CEDERET.  
VIXITQ(UE) AT U NUM UNDE EST SEN[EC] TAE EXORDIUM

Here lies the one called Sabinia, praised by all and distinguished by all qualities for which women are appreciated, she was pure, wise and fertile with offspring. She who, because she was so good, worthy of the gods, soon left this life after her husband, for whom alone she had remained on earth. She lived for only one (man) until the beginning of old age.

A reluctance to be separated from his dead wife is also apparent in the pious actions of a Dacian soldier who came to settle in Africa, a situation reminiscent of the words inscribed by Nicodromus in *CIL* 12792 and quoted on the previous page:

LAMBÈSE (LAMBAESIS)

[*CIL* 2772]

D(IS) M(ANIBUS) S(ACRUM) FLAVIAE IULIOSAE CONIUGI VIX(IT) AN(NIS) XXVII / M(ARCUS) SERVILIUS  
FORTUNATUS A MILITIIS QUI PER / MARIA ET TERRAS RETULIT RELIQUIAS CONIUGIS EX / PROVINCIA DACIA  
Consecrated to the souls of the departed. To Flavia Iuliosa, a wife who lived 27 years. Marcus Servilius  
Fortunatus, a soldier, who crossed sea and land with the ashes of his wife from the province of Dacia.

Similar sentiments were expressed by widows - Cornelia Galla mourned the loss of her husband and had a marble portrait of him made so that his image would always be with her while she was alive:

HAIDRA (AMMAEDARA)

[*CIL* 434 = 11518 & P.2359; *CLE* 480; *ILT* 426]

HIC SITUS EST VARIUS COGNOMINE FRONTINIANUS | QUEM CONIUNX LEPIDA POSUIT CORNELIA GALLA |  
DULCIA RESTITUENS VETERIS SOLACIA VITAE | MARMOREOS VOLTUS STATUIS OCULOS ANIMUMQUE |  
LONGIUS UT KARA POSSET SATURARE FIGURA | HOC SOLAMEN ERIT VISUS NAM PIGNUS AMORIS | PECTORE  
CONTEGITUR MEMOR[IA] DULCEDINE MENTIS | NEC POTERIT FACILI LABIUM OBLIVIONE PERIRE | SET DUM USTA  
MANET TOT EST IN CORDE MARITUS | NEC MIR(UM) QUONIAM TALES QUAE FEMINA MORES ...

Here lies Varius Frontinianus, whom his charming wife Cornelia Galla laid to rest. In an attempt to recall for her consolation the gentleness of a past life, she has given him a marble face, so that this dear image may long satisfy her eyes and her soul. This will be a consolation, a gentle souvenir, the proof of love which hides in a heart, and cannot die by an easy forgetfulness of the lips. The ashes of my husband here fill my whole heart. Nor (is it) a wonder for such are the customs of a woman . . . .

When the unfortunate Charite in Apuleius' novel kills herself she is destined to remain a wife forever, a *coniunx perpetua*, as she is buried *unita sepultura ibidem marito perpetuam coniugem reddidere* ('within the same sepulchre to be his spouse forever') [*Metam.* 8.14]. As a *topos* this sentiment endured to the 6<sup>th</sup> century to surface in the poetry of Corippus, when John Troglita's widow laments her loss:

. . . cur non per bella cucurri? / nunc pariter miseros caperent fors saeva sepulcri / clausa duos ruptae subito  
telluris hiatu. / dulcia consortis strinxissem pectora palmis / miscuissemque simul corpus complexa mariti.

<sup>83</sup> This inscription has already been quoted in full on p. 111.

<sup>84</sup> The dating of this inscription and some problems regarding the names of the individuals (almost obliterated) are discussed by LADJIMI-SEBAÏ (1990b): 'L'amour en Afrique romaine'. Further conjectures on dating and general typology in FERCHIOU (1990): 'Le monument funéraire de Numisia Marcellina'.



Why did I not range through the battle myself? If I had, the cruel destiny of a grave, concealed in that unforeseen cleft in the earth, would have carried off the two of us together, poor creatures. Then, my hands in his, I would have bound our sweet breasts together and felt our bodies mingle as I embraced my husband.

[Ioh. 173-177]

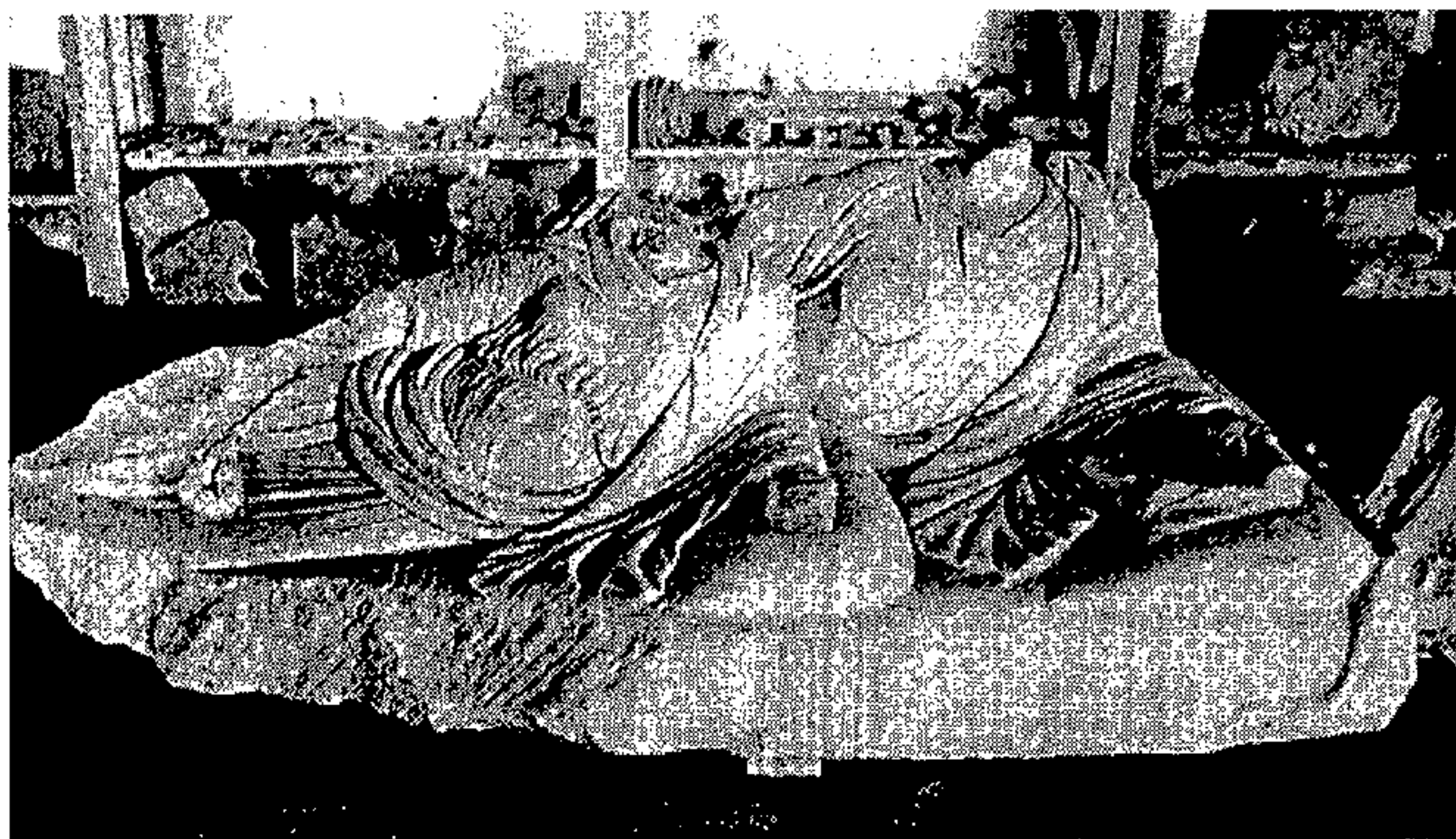


FIGURE 6.9 A GESTURE OF AFFECTION

Sometimes sculpture also tries to convey the ideal that a marriage was based on more than just a practical union. Figure 6.9 shows an arrangement of the two figures very similar to the 6<sup>th</sup> century BC Etruscan sarcophagus shown below, including the parallel alignment of the bodies and the man's hand on his wife's shoulder in what amounts to a gesture of tenderness or affection. Kraeling (1962: 185) notes that this type of sculptural arrangement is more common in the Greek East than in the West, and the Greek influence is to be expected since the sarcophagus was found in the city of Ptolemais, and dates to about AD 200.

In a less idealized context marriage was regarded as something of a mixed blessing and its advantages as well as its troubles are presented. Augustine often visited Carthage and commented on the relations of husbands and wives as one of many social ills, as discussed below. The converse of the ideal marriage is the subject of an epigram by Luxorius devoted to the quarrelsome nature of one Catucia - her husband, by Luxorius' description, never got a word in:



FIGURE 6.10 ETRUSCAN SARCOPHAGUS OF THE 6<sup>th</sup> CENTURY BC

*De funere mulieris formosae quae litigiosa fuit*

*Gorgoneos vultus habuit Catucia coniunx,  
Haec dum pulcra foret, iurgia saepe dabat.  
Fecerat atque suum semper rixando maritum,  
Esset ut insano stultius ore tacens.*

*Et quotiens illam trepido cernebat amore,  
Horrebat, tamquam vera Medusa foret.  
Defuncta est tandem haec iurgia ferre per umbras  
Cumque ipsa litem reddere Persephone.*

About the death of a beautiful quarrelsome woman

A married woman named Catucia had the looks of a Gorgon. Although she was beautiful, she was often involved in quarrels. By her constant bickering she had caused her husband to remain stupidly silent because of her raving talk. As often as he looked upon her with frightened love, he shuddered as if she were the real Medusa. At last she died, to carry these wrangles into the lower world and to dispute with Persephone herself.

[Epigr. 52]



While testimonies of perfect harmonious married lives are to some extent paying lip service to convention, there were mechanisms within marriage to achieve such concord. In his *Metamorphoses* the relationship of a husband and his wife is described in balances:

*Nam et ipse semper cum mea coniuge tam concorditer vixi, ut ex secta prudentium eadem nobis ambobus placerunt. Sed nec aequitas ipsa patitur habere plus auctoritatis uxorem quam maritum.*

For also I myself lived so amicably with my wife, that according to the way of the philosophers we liked the same things. But Equality herself does not allow the wife to have more authority than the husband. [Metam. 9.27]

This neatly illustrates that *concordia* did not necessarily imply equality in a way that we might perhaps understand it today. Although a greater sense of partnership entered the Roman conception of marriage during the Empire, it was still the wife's duty to realize her natural inferiority and obey her husband (Veyne 1987: 37).

### Obsequium and domestic politics

The precise nature of *obsequium* is much debated by modern scholars, particularly since in the first few centuries of the Empire it had become customary for women to marry *sine manu* and remain in the power of their fathers, as discussed in Chapter 3. This and other factors must have given women a greater chance for autonomy, and affected the balance of the married relationship more favourably for them.<sup>85</sup> Moreover, although Roman culture is generally identified as 'patriarchal', this does not mean that we can think in unitary terms of male and female power. The lack of power experienced by a young newly married wife could change once she had born heirs which gave her a higher status, and older women sometimes had considerable power in the household.<sup>86</sup> Admittedly much of these aspects have to do with individual personality, and these facilitate or detract from the possibility of women possessing authority. In Pudentilla's case we hear that a guardian had been appointed for her [Apol. 101], but that she was in a position to make up her own mind can be demonstrated in the fact that only by blackmailing her through the interest of her children can her father-in-law make her submit to agree to marry Sicinius Clarus [Apol. 68.6], and even then he is not successful. Conversely we also have to note that Pudentilla had to use a certain amount of manipulation to get what she wanted, too!

The meaning of *obsequium* given by the *L&S* is 'compliance, yieldingness, complaisance or indulgence' from *obsequor*, 'to yield or submit to another's will'. The word would seem at first glance to apply specifically to women. At Caesarea, Crispina [CIL 21179] is commended for her submissiveness and eagerness to please (*Coniugis opsequio semper placuis(s)e*), and a number of Roman African inscriptions specifically use the word *obsequium* in referring to the virtues of women within the marital relationship:

JEBEL AZZA (NEAR KEF)

[CIL 16286; ILT 1665]

D(IS) M(ANIBUS) S(ACRUM) | VICTORI | NA QUAE ET | CHARITOSA | PUDICISSIMA | OBSEQUENTIS | SIMA  
MORIBUS | EXCELLENTIS | MA PIA SUO[R]U[M] | AM[A]N[T]ISSIMA | FEMINA | VIXIT AN(NIS) LXXI

Consecrated to the spirits of the departed. Victorina also known as Charitosa was most chaste and submissive in her behaviour; of exceptional devotion, a woman loving to her own (family). She lived 71 years.

LAMBÈSE (LAMBAESIS)

[CIL 3531]

DIS MANIBUS | SACRUM | CL(AUDIAE) SUCCESSAE | CN(EIUS) BADUSIUS LEO | CONIUGI | HUMANISSIMAE

<sup>85</sup> Compare for example the implications of this excerpt from a senatorial speech attributed to Lucius Valerius in 195 BC:

*Nunquam salvis suis exiit servitus muliebris, et ipsae libertatem quam viduitas et orbitas facit detestantur.*

Never, while their men survive, is feminine subjection shaken off, and they themselves abhor the freedom which the loss of husbands and fathers produces. [Liv. 34.7.12]

<sup>86</sup> See discussion Chapter 8.



| SANCTISSIMAE | FIDELISSIMAE | OBSEQUENTISSIMAE | VIX(IT) AN(NIS) XXXVII | B(ENE) M(ERENTI) D(E) SE  
F(ECIT)

Consecrated to the spirits of the departed. Gnaeus Badusius Leo set this up for his wife, Claudia Successa, most humane, most virtuous, most faithful and most submissive. She lived 37 years. She was worthy of him.

In one inscription [CIL 5804] from Sigus, however, the term *obsequium* seems to be applicable to both Iulia Spesina and to her commemorator husband, since she ‘surpassed’ her husband in piety and compliance (*obsequio pietatis superasti*). Also in the *Apologia* the word is used in this sense [100] of compliance or devotion, where Apuleius refers to himself as *obsequentissimum maritum* or ‘most devoted husband’. Since the concept can be applied to both men and women, this inclines one to believe that the word *obsequium* is an indication of devotion and self sacrifice of one partner in marriage rather than its more literal meaning, which would imply the subservience of one partner. Treggiari compromises by suggesting that *obsequium* is ‘less an attitude of mind than a manner of behaving obligingly’ (1991: 238).<sup>87</sup> Or put another way, as the character of Andromache is made to say in Euripides’ *Troades* [642-51], ‘I knew when to have my way and when to let him have his’.<sup>88</sup> Pudentilla too outwits her father-in-law’s intentions to make her marry Sicinus Clarus by avoiding the marriage until the death of her father-in-law made the marriage unnecessary. Hunink (1997: 181) points out the Penelope-like image that Apuleius cultivates here. It is very much an ideal image of patience, faith and loyalty, but still one where women survive by manipulation of events rather than by direct confrontation with authority. This practice by wives is probably the reason why the responsibility of marital harmony was laid at the wife’s door, a view held by both Roman men and women and voiced by Tacitus in the *Agricola*.<sup>89</sup> Whether this type of *obsequium* was diplomacy or manipulation, it also seems to have been a way to avoid abuse. In the *Confessiones* Augustine describes this scene in the home of his parents:

*sed noverat haec non resistere irato viro, non tantum facto, sed ne verbo quidem. Iam vero refractum et quietum cum opportunum viderat, rationem facti sui reddebat, si forte ille inconsideratius commotus fuerat.*

But she knew very well that an angry husband is not to be contradicted, not in deed and not in word. But as soon as he was calmer and grew quiet, when she saw her opportunity, she would give him an account of her actions, that he had been offended on too slight a cause. [Conf. 9.9]

Augustine also tells us that his mother would, possibly with some sarcasm, tell other wives, who often bore the marks of beating, that the marriage tables made them slaves (*ancillae*) and being this they should not rise up against their masters (*adversos dominos*). Monica would then advise them on how to treat their husbands by the techniques she herself employed. Wife-beating was clearly not uncommon, judging from another passage from Augustine’s letters, where a man disciplines his wife for looking out of the window since he interprets this as a prelude to dalliance [Ep. 246.2].<sup>90</sup>

<sup>87</sup> TREGGIARI (1991a): *Roman marriage*, 239, defines *obsequium* as co-operation rather than obedience. Another example from Carthage [CIL 13134] uses the words *hobes caro sponso*, which has been interpreted as *hob(oedi)e(n)s* in the CIL, supporting the idea of ‘obedience’. Treggiari disagrees with the latter explanation on the grounds that words such as *oboedire* or *parere* are not used in the context of marriage anywhere else (1991a: 240).

<sup>88</sup> ἤϊδη δ’ ἄμ’ ἐχρήν νικᾶν πόσιν | κείνων τε νίκην ὧν ἐρχήν παρίεναι.

<sup>89</sup> Traditionally Romans held the view that marital harmony was the responsibility of the wife:

*Vixeruntque mira concordia, per mutuam caritatem et in vicem se anteponendo, nisi quod in bona uxore tanto maior laus, quanto in mala plus culpa est.* (They (Agricola and Domitia Decidiana) lived in rare accord, maintained by mutual affection and unselfishness; in such a partnership, however, a good wife deserves more than half the praise, just as a bad one deserves more than half the blame.) [Tac., Agric. 6.1]

<sup>90</sup> Wife-beating was never considered as grounds for divorce in antiquity, but in AD 548 under Justinian a heavy financial penalty was introduced for offenders [Nov. Iust. 127.4]. The power and lack of power held by women and slaves in the household is discussed very



Thus equality for men and women was not a concept that found much of a following in Graeco-Roman antiquity.<sup>91</sup> When one husband from Sigus [CIL 5834]<sup>92</sup> calls his late wife Pomponia Fortunula 'superior to her husband' (*super[u]sti [mar] /itu(m)*) on her tombstone, this is probably not meant to be taken literally, and in all likelihood he would have been most offended had anyone else made such a statement, as Augustine's father would no doubt have been had he heard his son finding his mother *melior*, the 'better of the two' [Conf. 1.9 (full text cited below)]. Moreover, superiority in particular qualities in a wife did not equal a position of inferiority on the part of the husband. An inscription near Ammaedara distributes praise evenly between husband and wife in a double epitaph:

HAJ ABID HENCHIR (NEAR AMMAEDARA) [ILT 489; CLE 2299; ILAFRIC 175]  
D(IS) M(ANIBUS) S(ACRUM) | VIBIA CAELI F(ILIA) V(IXIT) A(NNIS) XL | H(IC) S(ITA) E(ST) CERTAVI TECUM  
CON|IUNX PIETATE VIR|TUTE FRUGALITATE | ET AMORE SED PERIIT | CUNCTIS HA[EC SORS CON]DEDATUR  
I[ANUARIA] | NUS UXORI ...  
D(IS) M(ANIBUS) S(ACRUM) | CL(AUDIUS) IANUARIA | NUS V(IXIT) A(NNIS) LXXV | H(IC) S(ITUS) E(ST) | BONOSA  
MARITO POS(UIT)  
Consecrated to the souls of the departed. Vibia, daughter of Caelius, lived 40 years. Here she rests. Husband,  
I have vied with you in piety, virtue, frugality and love, but she perished, let this lot be assigned to all. Ianuarianus  
for his wife ...  
Consecrated to the souls of the departed. Claudius Ianuarianus lived 75 years. Here he rests. Bonosa erected this for  
her husband.

Under Christian teaching the concept of *obsequium* came to include the 'obedience' of a wife to a husband.<sup>93</sup> In Africa this understanding is clearly reflected in the writings of Augustine.<sup>94</sup> But Christianity did present an area of conflict for local women in some respects. Augustine ascribes the success of his mother Monica in obeying her husband to her love for God, although according to Augustine himself his father was 'inferior' in quality:

*et in hoc adiuvabas eam, ut superaret virum, cui melior serviebat, quia et in hoc tibi utique id iubenti serviebat.*  
And in this You assisted her to overcome her husband, to whom (though the better of the two) she continued her  
service; wherein she principally served You, who commanded her to do so. [Conf. 1.9]

Furthermore, as bishop, Augustine was often confronted with the conflict between women's family obligations and their calling to follow Christ. Ecdicia, a 4<sup>th</sup> century matron, felt a calling to celibacy, but was reprimanded by Augustine for not showing the necessary *obsequium* of the marriage bond towards her husband, who had not desired continence and who objected to his wife's gifts to monks [Ep. 262.1]. Augustine felt that her calling did not free her from her family obligations.<sup>95</sup> In the case of Perpetua, however, he took the opposite view,

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generally through the example of Augustine by CLARK (1998): 'Women, slaves and the hierarchies of domestic violence: the family of St Augustine'.

<sup>91</sup> ASPREGEN (1990): *The male woman: a feminine ideal in the early Church*, traces the philosophic notion of female equality through Plato, its absence in Aristotle, through Stoicism and culminating in the Christian idea (which she claims was strongly influenced by the Apocryphal Acts) in which a woman, as in many philosophic sects, had to become male (for example in dress) for this equality to be accomplished.

<sup>92</sup> The inscription is quoted in full on p. 166.

<sup>93</sup> This power of the male head of the household survived into the Christian period and was confirmed by the emperor Constantine [Gaius 1.55; 2.86-7; *Instit. Iust.* 1.9; 2.9; *Dig.* 1.6; 49.17; *Cod.* 8.46; 6.61; 12.30.36].

<sup>94</sup> *alterius regentis obsequentis amicalis quaedam et germana coniunctio*. 'a kind of friendly and genuine union of the one ruling and the other obeying' [De Bono Coniug. 1.1]. See also De Mor. Eccl. Cath. 1.30.63. The development of Augustine's thoughts on marriage is discussed by BERROUARD (1972): 'Saint Augustin et l'indissolubilité du mariage'.

<sup>95</sup> Augustine's letters to two other noble ladies in Rome, Juliana and the widow Proba, also concern the issue of continence [Ep. 130 and De Bono Vid.]. Generally his views show some insight into human nature - he does not think that continence within marriage is applicable to the average man [De Bono Coniug. 13.15].

praising both her and Felicitas for putting their martyrdom before their families. These ladies, however, were removed from his own reality by time.<sup>96</sup>

These were then the essential elements leading up to Roman marriage and how it was projected in its ideal form in the African context. Since this type of marriage reflected positively in the sense of self-advertisement, projecting the values that were held in high esteem by Romanized societies of their time, we naturally have a far greater volume of evidence for this than we do of the informal type of relationships which were discussed in the previous chapter, where information often survived more often by chance than by intention. The image of the wife herself, however, was also an area in which much could be gained by the right type of façade management and projection, as will be demonstrated in the following chapter.

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<sup>96</sup> See further discussion of this point in Chapter 13, pp. 338-339.





## CHAPTER 7

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# CONCEPTS OF FEMALE PURITY AND FAMILY HONOUR

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As we have seen in Chapter 6, there were certain congenital status-conferring aspects such as birth and wealth which were crucial in determining a woman's marriageability, particularly among the propertied status groups. In this chapter we shall be looking more closely at those aspects which were not inherent, and which a woman could, at least to some extent, manage in conjunction with a set of expectations about the appropriate traits of character and forms of behaviour for women in Romanized society. The desirability of these virtues is integrally connected to the fact that women could equally bring honour and disgrace to the men with whom they were associated as daughters, wives and mothers. Some of the female virtues discussed in this chapter were true virtues, but often intangible and more often than not merely projected through visible signs, what we might call representative virtues, based on such externals as dress and demeanour. Other virtues were those which consisted of specific activities connected with women's private or domestic role, from the execution of her duties as mother to those of the thrifty and industrious housewife. This chapter will also examine the other cultural influences which impacted on the Roman ideal in the Roman African context to determine to what extent the Roman model prevailed as the norm for the upwardly mobile.

### MALE HONOUR AND FEMALE VIRTUE

In his account of the Vandalic wars, Procopius recounts that Sergius, a general of the Byzantine army, was disliked by his peers, not least 'because he had shown himself strangely fond of the wives and possessions of others' (καὶ ὅτι γυναικῶν τε καὶ χρημάτων ἀλλοτρίων ἄτοπός τις ἐραστής ἐγεγόνει) [*De Bell. Vand.* 4.22.2]. Here the behaviour of Sergius is clearly unacceptable not because he is a womaniser, but because the women he desires are counted as the possessions of others. This view of women as the property of men is as ancient as the tale of Achilles and Agamemnon and probably before recorded memory, and Augustine as an acute observer of human psychology already points to this basic drive to possess goods such as wives, sons and slaves [*Serm.* 297.5.8; *Enarr. in Ps.* 143.18]. Tertullian unintentionally corroborates this view of women as property when he relates that Christians share all property without hesitation, except for wives:

*In isto loco consortium solvimus in quo solo ceteri homines consortium exercent, qui non amicorum solummodo*

*matrimonia usurpant, sed et sua amicis patientissime subministrant.*

At that point we dissolve our partnership, which is the one place where the rest of men make it effective. Not only do they use the wives of their friends, but also most patiently yield their own to their friends. [Apologet. 39.11]

Cohen (1991: 120) places this phenomenon within the Mediterranean context of honour and shame, in which there is a further link from male honour and the maintenance of social order to a view of female sexuality which must be controlled by men and confined to the private sphere. Thus the fictional Barbarus in the *Metamorphoses* [9.17], who uses a trusted slave to ensure his wife's fidelity while he himself is away, is reflected in reality when friends and neighbours are asked to keep an eye on wives during the absence of their husbands [Aug., *In Ioh. Ev. Tract.* 13.11].<sup>1</sup> Attacking a man's character by criticizing the virtue of his womenfolk is linked to the fact that Roman tradition held a man responsible for the behaviour of the women in his family, as discussed in Chapters 1 and 3.<sup>2</sup> The dictates of Roman society sought to restrain a woman's desires, because the sexual misconduct of for example a mother brings dishonour to the whole family.<sup>3</sup> It is to discredit his opponent that Apuleius designates his *cubiculum*, the most private domain of private life, as the scene of immorality [Apol. 75].<sup>4</sup> He is implying the fuller context of infidelity which he details in the *Metamorphoses*:

*Iamque nocte promota solum perducit ad domum, probeque capite contectum amatorem strenuum infert adusque dominae cubiculum. Commodum novis amplexibus amori rudi litabant, commodum prima stipendia Veneri militabant nudi milites; et contra omnium opinionem captata noctis opportunitate improvisus maritus assistit. Suae domus ianuam iam pulsat.....*

Late at night he led the eager lover to the house and then, alone and with his head well covered, right to his mistress's bedroom. Just when they were making a sacrifice to untried Love with their first embraces, just as they were fighting their first campaign as stripped soldiers of Venus, contrary to everyone's expectations her husband appeared at the door of his house, taking advantage of the night for a surprise visit. First he knocked....

[Metam. 9.20]

Cohen (1991: 117-8) makes another point regarding the relationship between female purity and male honour in that there was a sharp divergence between the ideological representation of sex and gender and actual social practice, and that appearances were often more important than reality, particularly for the propertied status groups. For women the criteria for the ideological representation of their gender were manifold. The *domestica bona*, or the physical, spiritual and practical qualities desired of a wife, such as chastity, modesty of appearance, deference, good nature, affection, devotion to family and religious devotion, were qualities which enhanced assets like good birth, beauty and fertility. When Baebia Saturnina is described in *CIL* 78 as 'an example of conjugal virtue' (*exemplum sanctimoniae coniugalis*) this conjures up a list of such attributes commonly held as desirable in a wife.<sup>5</sup> The closest Roman African equivalent for the *Laudatio Turiae* in citing the traditional

<sup>1</sup> Similarly, Commodianus tells us that a woman 'desires to be wanton. She seeks to live without restraint' (*Lasciva vult esse, sine freno vivere quaerit*) [*Instruct.* 7; *CSEL* 1.7.19]. This figures so prominently in ancient writings, including those of Afro-Romano authors, that further examples would be redundant.

<sup>2</sup> Cicero on numerous occasions attacks his enemies by implying that they either are not man enough to do anything about their sister's/wife's illicit sexuality or are in fact encouraging it and acting as the *aemulus* [*Pro Sest.*, *In Verr.*].

<sup>3</sup> As Cicero puts it, it disgraces herself, the family, the lineage and her son's name [*Pro Cael.* 1.1; 16.188]. BROWN (1987): *Late Antiquity*, 247-248, sees this link of male honour with female chastity developing prominently during the mid 2<sup>nd</sup> century AD when the concepts of *concordia* and *homonoia* gained public expression. For a general overview of the shame and honour construct, see WIKAN (1984): 'Shame and honour: a contestable pair'.

<sup>4</sup> The text is quoted on p. 6. HUNINK (1977): *Apuleius of Madauros: Pro se de magia*, 192, points out the similarities between Apuleius' description and 'a full-blown brothel in comic style'.

<sup>5</sup> Also *exemplum feminarum* [*CIL* 8854] and *exempli femina* [*CIL* 15695; 12191; 2152; 26150]. Skill in wool working still found in



female virtues is contained in an inscription found at Hr Zaatli:

ZAATLI (HR) (BETWEEN CAPSA AND SUFETULA)

[C/L 11294; IL 58444; IL 7314]

D(IS) M(ANIBUS) S(ACRUM) | POSTUMIA MATRONILIA INCOMPARABILIS CONIUX, MATER BONA AVIA | PISSIMA  
PUDICA RELIGIOSA LABORIO | SA FRUGI EFFICAXS VIGILANS SOLLICITA UNIVIRA UNICUBA [T]OTIUS INDUSTRIAE  
ET FIDEI | MATRONA; VIXIT ANNIS N(UMERO) LIII MENSIBUS N(UMERO) V, DIEBUS TRIBUS.

Postumia Matronilla, incomparable wife, good mother, most dutiful grandmother, chaste, religious, hard-working, thrifty, efficient, vigilant, careful, a woman of one husband and one bed, a matron of all industry and faith - she lived fifty-three years, five months and three days.

A 'good' wife received due praise, and the traditional virtues are freely extolled in inscriptions for Roman African women from Tripolitania to as far afield as Volubilis.<sup>6</sup> Funerary epitaphs draw the idealized picture of the wife and mother who lived only to bring her husband healthy offspring and to live in harmony with him till death parted them. This is amply attested in the rest of the Empire. Whether or not all these epithets are the result of genuine feeling or not is impossible to say, but they do express an awareness of an ideal. A desire to belong to a certain status group through being seen to express certain Roman values can also be inferred from the Roman African evidence. This is expressed most particularly by the lower and middle status groups, while examples of the élite (admittedly a much smaller percentage of the population) expressing praise for such virtues is much more rare - epigraphically here we are more inclined to find examples of women being thanked for their *liberalitas*.<sup>7</sup> The expression of female virtues is subject to another social construct which removes them even further from a 'real' image of Roman African women, which is that, while the virtues for Roman African women were modesty/propriety, chastity/fidelity, industry and honour, and a woman could be credited for these in her own right, just as often the credit seemed to go to her husband, or whoever was supposed to have engendered and trained these virtues in her, as we saw in the case of some educated women.<sup>8</sup> Lastly some indication of the value of such epithets in the eyes of Roman Africans can be deduced from a simple statistical exercise, not the final proof, but interesting nevertheless. The ratio of female virtues of outward appearance to those that would have been experienced on a more personal level, for example, piety as compared to affection, indicates that commemorators in Africa favoured the former, deeming it more important to present women as pious/chaste (*castissima/ pientissima/ sanctissima*) than as loving (*carissima/ dulcissima*).<sup>9</sup>

On the one hand these were truly desirable virtues: loyalty and devotion (*pudicitia* and *fides*) to a husband, for example, were important in a Roman marriage where husband and wife were economically united (Treggiari 1991a: 238), and to preserve the purity of the agnatic family.<sup>10</sup> On the other hand that by which many of these virtues was socially recognized was largely a matter of façade management which related to the honour of both men and women. The idealization of certain prescribed behaviour for women was judged on outward

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the *Laudatio Turiae* is seldom mentioned from the 1<sup>st</sup> century AD onwards, but see Figure 7. 32 for the exception.

<sup>6</sup> The ratio of Roman African women who appear without any adjective or epithet as opposed to those who are described by at least one in *CIL* is 1:2.

<sup>7</sup> See Chapters 12 and 13 on this aspect.

<sup>8</sup> See Chapter 4, especially p. 71 n. 61.

<sup>9</sup> TREGGIARI (1991a): *Roman marriage*, 232 n. 10, by contrast quotes Curchin's result of the examination of a small epigraphical sample based on Rome: 'the supremacy of affection over piety'.

<sup>10</sup> In *sine manu* marriages the economic link especially after the death of one partner was more tenuous than before: there was no right of intestate succession or inheritance between husband and wife, or between a mother and her children, since she legally belonged to the family of her father. The right of succession between a mother and child was only legally recognized in AD 178.



appearance and comportment, and the latter became symbolic or representative of the actual virtues such as chastity and fidelity. Statues of Roman men and women wearing the *toga* or *stola* - sometimes long after these had gone out of fashion<sup>11</sup> - were not necessarily realistic depictions of individuals but rather representations of the connotations which these individuals wanted attached to their public image.<sup>12</sup> A woman in a Roman African context therefore had certain inherent features - her birth and ability to continue the family line of her husband - and certain attainable and maintainable aspects of her status, her *pietas*, her *pudor* or her *dignitas*, which she could project by regulating exteriors like dress and deportment.

For Christian women too outward appearance and behaviour are linked to the inner qualities desired by their religion. Tertullian sarcastically addresses those women who may feel embarrassed at having to give up the outward signs of their status when he says 'If we must keep the same appearance, let us also maintain the same conduct' (i.e. pagan conduct) (*simus et moribus isdem si et superficiei eadem*) [*De Cult. Fem.* 2.11.3], and Fulgentius in his letter to Proba instructs her that the clothing of the sacred virgin should be such that it bears witness to an inner chastity [22.1].

Being judged on appearances was of course not peculiar to the female sex. Vergil [*Aen.* 1.281] called the Romans the 'toga-clad people' because it was so distinctive a dress in the Mediterranean. It distinguished the Roman or Romanized élite from the barbarian in status and social function. Within Romanized society itself the Romans were 'highly sensitive to distinctions of dress and deportment' (Bradley 1997: 217).<sup>13</sup> In the African provinces the importance of the exterior in Roman culture is exemplified in the attention paid to Apuleius' appearance. He is accused of being too dandified, but claims rather to have the unkempt appearance of the philosopher [*Apol.* 4].<sup>14</sup>

All the ideal virtues as well as the external attributes which will be discussed below are related to the whole conception of *tutela* or control, since *pudicitia* and *pudor* require self-control, of body and of mind.<sup>15</sup> It is for this reason that the exteriorization of virtue idealizes aspects such as women walking with small (controlled) steps<sup>16</sup> and a narrow definition of what is proper dress and adornment. Luxorius' epigram from the Vandal period reveals that for beauty to equal chastity, control is required (even though this may not be to the speaker's taste here):<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> For example a 4<sup>th</sup> century sculptor's yard still produced statues wearing the Roman toga (Sebesta/Bonfante 1994: 8).

<sup>12</sup> 'An artistic monument was just as often a document to be 'read' with a particular meaning in mind' (Sebesta/Bonfante 1994:5).

<sup>13</sup> As can for example be illustrated from a number of passages from Seneca's epistles [114.4-88, 122.7]. On the Roman distinctions in dress see also WYKE (1994): 'Women in the mirror', 134-136.

<sup>14</sup> 'The wrong sort of attention to his appearance undermines a man's status as a male and exposes him to the charges of effeminacy and sexual passivity and, consequently, of deliberately renouncing the privileges and powers of the masculine role' (Wyke 1994: 137). The unkempt appearance of the philosopher is also the subject of Luxorius' *In philosophum hirsutum nocte tantum cum puellis concumbentem* (To a hairy philosopher who sleeps with girls only at night): *Omnibus clares Stoicus magister* ('In the eyes of everybody you are a distinguished Stoic philosopher'). The assumptions made from appearance are clear.

<sup>15</sup> These qualities were the female equivalent of the self-control which was a cardinal virtue for Roman men. Paul [*Titus* 2.5] also exhorts Christian wives to be 'self-controlled and pure'.

<sup>16</sup> *Cum enim muliebre habitum viri sumerent et magis quam mulieres gradum frangerent* (When men put on women's clothing they broke their steps more than women do) [Salvian, *De Gub. Dei* 7.19].

<sup>17</sup> A true reflection of the satirical genre. Thus HICKEY (1989): *Women of the Roman aristocracy as Christian monastics*, 93, on Juvenal: 'With these bitter comments about departures from traditional matronly honor, one would expect Juvenal to praise the virtuous woman. However, even if one ideal wife could be found in all of Rome, Juvenal would find her virtues tedious: 'I would rather have a Venusian



In mulierem pulcram castitati studentem:

*Pulcrrior et nivei cum sit tibi forma coloris,  
Cuncta pudicitiae iura tenere cupis.  
Mirandum est quali naturam laude gubernes  
Moribus ut Pallas, corpore Cypris eas.*

*Te neque coniugii libet excepisse levamen;  
Saepius exoptas nolle videre mares.  
Haec tamen est animo quamvis exosa voluptas  
Numquid non mulier conparis esse potes?*

To a beautiful woman devoted to chastity:

Although you have a beautiful snow-white body, you desire to **observe all the rules** of chastity. It is wonderful how gloriously you **control** nature, inasmuch as you pass for a Minerva in your way of life and for a Venus with your body. You find no happiness in taking to yourself the comfort of a husband, and you often choose to shun the sight of men. Nevertheless, you have a fancy for this pleasure, hateful though it may be to you! Is it not possible for you to be the wife of somebody like yourself? [Epigr. 78]

It is possible, given the extreme nature of this woman's chastity which amounts almost to asceticism, that she was a Christian, maybe even Arian during this period of Vandal supremacy, shunning sexual relations in the manner of Melania and many others. In the 4<sup>th</sup> century Monica's outward demeanour is described by Augustine [Conf. 9.9.21] as restrained and dignified, embodying the virtues which remained cardinal for élite Roman women (or those who emulated them) everywhere.

## ATTAINABLE AND MAINTAINABLE ELEMENTS OF STATUS

The above distinction between the abstract virtues, the representative virtues and the practical virtues will now be discussed in greater detail as they relate to the Roman African context. The following three sections will deal with each of these aspects in turn: the intangible virtues: *pudicitia*, *castitas*, *fides* and *pietas*; the outward representation of virtue through comportment, clothing and adornment, and lastly the activities of virtue such as motherhood and domestic *industria*.

### I. THE INTANGIBLE VIRTUES: *PUDICITIA*, *CASTITAS*, *FIDES* AND *PIETAS*

CONSTANTINE (CIRTA)

[CIL 7705 = ILALG II 1653]

D(IS) M(ANIBUS) | SALVIDENIA | Q(UINTI) F(ILIA) MINNA | ANTIQUAE CAS | TITATIS FEMINA | VIX(IT) AN(NIS)  
XXVII | H(IC) S(ITA) E(ST). O(SSA) T(UA) B(ENE) Q(UIESCANT).

To the souls of the departed. Salvidenia Minna, daughter of Quintus, a woman of the ancient virtues, lived 27 years. Here she lies. May her bones rest in peace.

The *antiquae castitatis feminae*, cardinal female virtues from the beginning of Roman historical consciousness, are certainly present on Roman African inscriptions for the reasons already discussed, either in this general and all-encompassing epithet, or by mentioning the individual virtues. The adjective most often used of women in Roman African inscriptions is *pia*, followed in frequency by *casta/issima*, *amans/tissima*, *cara/issima*, *dulcis/issima* and *pudica/issima* or *pudicitia*. Other terms such as *bona*, *digna/issima*, *fidelis/issima*, *indulgens/issima* are less common but still fairly frequent. *Indulgens* has the same implication as the term used in the *Laudatio Turiae*, *comitas* (courteousness, kindness) used as another term of praise for a wife, although Treggiari (1991: 241) notes that the latter is not one that is often used for the women of Rome in inscriptions. In Africa three inscriptions use this term to mention this quality [CIL 12792, 10828 and 647].<sup>18</sup>

*Pudicitia* is usually rendered in English by the word 'modesty'. More explicitly Treggiari (1991a: 233) defines

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wench for my wife than you, O Cornelia, mother of the Gracchi.....' [Sat. 6.166-169].

<sup>18</sup> Specific terms such as *frugi* or *fecunda* are relatively rare, and these will be discussed under section III in this Chapter (p. 156 *passim*).

*pudicitia* as the 'conscience which keeps a person from shameful actions', something which as far back as Plautus [*Stichus* 100-101] was connected with 'safeguarding the husband's reputation' (Treggiari 1991a: 236). In the case of young girls this meant retaining their virginity until their marriage. Here a clear case of façade management has already been mentioned, where Tertullian claims that so-called virgins aborted their babies to maintain the outward appearance of virginity.<sup>19</sup> It was more important to appear to be a virgin by outwardly modest behaviour than to actually be one. In the case of the matron *pudicitia* was a matter of remaining sexually faithful to her husband. As such *pudicitia* was closely related to the concept of *castitas*, 'chastity' or 'purity', and to *fides*, a woman's sexual loyalty to husband. In the Roman African evidence the word *pudica* is in fact seldom used on its own and is more commonly found together with words such as *casta*, *pia* or *sancta*, as for example in *CIL* 25986: *castitatis | et frugalitatis et pudici | tiae et disciplinae et | omnium bonorum exem | plum*, or in *CIL* 7156,<sup>20</sup> Livia Honorata was another such *exemplum pudicitiae*:

BEN GLAYA HENCHIR

[*CIL* 14379; *ILT* 1217; *CLE* 158]

D(IS) M(ANIBUS) S(ACRUM) | LIVIAE HONORATAE FIDELI | SIMPLICI, RELIGIOSAE, PI | AE QUALIS NEC FUIT | NEC ESSE POTEST. MON(EMENTUM) | STATUIT MARITUS DONO ME | MORIS GRATIA V(IXIT) A(NNIS) LVII. M(ENSE) (sic)  
Consecrated to the souls of the departed. For Livia Honorata, faithful, guileless, religious and dutiful. There never was nor can be another like her. A monument has been given by her husband in her memory. She lived 57 years and ? months.

In the *Metamorphoses* Apuleius has given his readers rather more scope for the faithful wives than seems to have been customary in the ancient novel.<sup>21</sup> His fictional characters Charite, Psyche and Plotina, although they may fall short of the standard set by Homer's faithful Penelope, stand out in the world of the novel which traditionally teems with infidelity. When Plotina's husband is unjustly found guilty and sent into exile, for example, she accompanies him, a unique example of fidelity in the world of the ancient novel (Schlam 1978:100). This is only a more elaborate image of what the epitaphs to Roman matrons attempt to create for casual readers and passers by.

### The fidelity of the *matrona*

As mentioned above, in Rome of the 1<sup>st</sup> century AD Propertius [4.11] makes the subject of his *laudatio*, Cornelia, take pride in the fact that, along with the other virtues of the Roman matron, her lineage and her children, she was *uni nupta*, once married. Fidelity in the Roman wife was a much vaunted virtue since it was important that children born to a marriage were legitimate. The greatest testament to such fidelity was the *univira* (or *univiria*, *unicuba*), who knew only one husband in her lifetime. In the days of the Roman Republic, this epithet would have been applied to a woman who had predeceased her husband, which we can see from the fact that on average the inscriptions referring to women who bear the title of *univirae* show that they died at a relatively young age and were survived by their husbands, who commemorate them. Being an *univira* was therefore seen at one and the same time as symbolic of good fortune (because their husbands had not

<sup>19</sup> As referred to on p. 106-107. Here we may also recall that Christian contemporaries were not so inclined to take things at face-value - so-called virgins were tested by midwives, as related by Augustine (see p. 94).

<sup>20</sup> *CIL* 7156 (the silversmith Praecilius from Cirta): '... Laughter and luxury I always enjoyed in the company of my dear friends, but after the death of my chaste (*pudica*) wife Valeria I did not find life to be the same. While I could, I led an enjoyable life with my holy wife (*cum coniuge sanct[a]*)'. Perhaps it was his sedate and sober lifestyle after her death that allowed him to reach his claimed age of 100 years.

<sup>21</sup> See LATEINER (2000): 'Marriage and the return of spouses in Apuleius' *Metamorphoses*', 314.



predeceased them) and of feminine propriety (their husbands had had no cause to divorce them). In the hope that such good fortune would be a positive omen, a woman with a single living husband was chosen to be the maid of honour at weddings, the *univira pronuba*, an age-old Roman custom that was clearly still prevalent in Tertullian's day [*De Exhort. Cast.* 13; *De Monog.* 17.4].<sup>22</sup> For the same reasons priesthoods for women such as the *flaminica Dialis* required women to be *univirae*, or male priests to be married to *univirae*. Special cults existed for these women in the worship of Fortuna Muliebris or Womanly Fortune, and in the worship of the Mater Matuta, Tertullian mentions a rite in which *univirae* attacked and drove out a slave woman [*De Exhort. Cast.* 13; *De Monog.* 17]. At Rome all Roman matrons participated in this ritual, and only in Africa is it limited to *univirae*. The ritual in Africa clearly demonstrates that the honours awarded to women were also prized by women themselves and bestowed prestige by exclusivity, since not many women could claim this title. Lightman and Zeisel (1977: 22) point out, however, that the ideal of the once-married woman was increasingly adopted by individuals who were not of élite status, and that the term *univira* became disassociated from its original religious, cultic and élite identity in a process of social diffusion.<sup>23</sup>

The five inscriptions mentioning *univirae* or equivalent terms in the African provinces all give ages over 50: *ILAlg* II, 1079: 75; *CIL* 19470: 75; *CIL* 7384: 81; *CIL* 11294: 53.<sup>24</sup> In all likelihood these women survived their husbands, since they are not commemorated by a husband (or any specific person, in fact), and then did not remarry. Thus the widowed *univira* represented the concept that a woman married to produce legitimate children, and that once this was accomplished her purpose in life was attained and there was therefore no 'need' to marry again. Such *univirae* were highly praised with the unstated purpose of preserving and strengthening the agnatic *familia*. In cases of remarriage there was always some danger that a woman could disinherit her children in favour of her new husband, something which is clearly also present in the case made against Apuleius. Roman law even prohibited the remarriage of women over fifty years of age (Harrison 2000: 81), since such marriages would not be for the purpose of procreation.<sup>25</sup> But once again the ideal was not supported in practice - up to the end of the 3<sup>rd</sup> century women were in fact encouraged to remarry unless they were too old for childbearing.<sup>26</sup> Remarriage after divorce or widowhood was quite common during the Roman Empire, since women married at a young age compared to their husbands, and would normally outlive them if they survived childbirth. The terms *univira* or *unicuba* are consequently not found very often in epitaphs across the Empire. Only 20 are noted by Kötting (quoted in Treggiari 1991a: 233) for pagan women, and 80 across pagan, Jewish and Christian inscriptions, including both those who had predeceased their husbands, as well as those who had

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<sup>22</sup> Tertullian comments on the association of the *univira pronuba* with magical properties [*De Exhort. Cast.* 13].

<sup>23</sup> Tacitus [*Germ.* 19.3-4] admired the practice of the Germans that only virgins marry and widows therefore cannot marry again, so that 'their desire may not be for the man, but for the marriage' (*ne longior cupiditas, ne tamquam maritum, sed tamquam matrimonium ament*). This is a reflection of a commonly held view in antiquity which sought to contain women's sexuality. Discussed in an article by WALCOT (1991): 'On widows and their reputation in antiquity'.

<sup>24</sup> *CIL* 16737a is too fragmented to make out the age.

<sup>25</sup> Egyptian census returns indicate that after the age of 35 Roman women did not usually remarry (Frier 1999: 93). Unfortunately there is no such comparable source of information for Roman Africa. A law of 371 stated that a woman under 25 wishing to remarry needed the consent of her father, or if he had predeceased her, had to negotiate with her family [*Cod. Theod.* 3.7.1].

<sup>26</sup> The Augustan laws requiring marriage after divorce or the death of a spouse were repealed by Constantine [*Cod. Theod.* 8.16.1]. On the laws themselves see GALINSKY (1981): 'Augustus' legislation on morals and marriage', 126-144; TREGGIARI (1991a): *Roman marriage*, 277-298.



remained widowed after their husbands' death.<sup>27</sup> In the African context there are only the 5 mentioned above whose tombstones attest to the fact that they remained faithful to only one husband.<sup>28</sup> Where Iuventia Rogata [CIL 19470] and Geminia Ingenua [CIL 7384; ILAlg II 1185] (both from Cirta) are praised by the single word *univira*, Postumia Matronilia [CIL 11294] referred to above<sup>29</sup> is both *univira* and *unicuba* - not only was she married to only one man but she let no-one share her bed but her husband, and *sola contenta marito vixitq(ue) at unum*, says another African tombstone [ILAlg II 1079].

In other cases where women themselves promise lifelong devotion to a departed spouse, for example on his tombstone, it is of course possible that they did later marry again.<sup>30</sup> In most instances, however, we cannot tell whether women like Cornelia Galla, like some of the other women mentioned in Chapter 6, who wanted to ensure that her husband's image would always be with her during her lifetime [CIL 434 = 11518 & p.2359; CLE 480; ILT 426], remained faithful, even though there is no extant record of a second husband. Perhaps this was the type of image that inspired Apuleius to make his character Charite, mourning her husband Tleptolemus, instruct that a statue of Dionysus be carved with Tleptolemus' features [Metam. 8.7]. Charite's resolve to remain true to her beloved dead husband, despite the prospect of another marriage, are idealized, and even more so in the Christian context: these are the sentiments of Augustine's concubine, who is sent back to Africa so that her 'husband' may marry for ambition (*vovens tibi alium se virum nescituram* [Conf. 6.15.25]), while she takes the veil.

Indigenous African traditions seem to have placed no value on chastity before marriage, but some emphasis on female fidelity after marriage. Nevertheless the latter does not appear to have given any greater emphasis to the Roman tradition of the idealization of the *univira* or wifely *fides* - the Roman African evidence is really quite moderate compared to that of other provinces (as established by Kötting above) in this regard.

### **Remarriage**

Widowhood was a state fraught with connotations and one which placed women in quite a separate category from faithful wives or virginal maidens.<sup>31</sup> When a woman lost her husband, she found herself in the position of lessened family protection, while at the same time she was usually more financially independent because of it. It is more than likely that such a woman became, as Veyne (1987: 75) describes it, 'imperious', her own mistress and able to pick and choose among fortune hunters. This would certainly support the plausibility of Apuleius' independent portrait of Pudentilla. A second or third marriage for a woman would make her more of an equal partner than a first marriage at which she might be very young and her husband considerably older.

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<sup>27</sup> THURSTON (1989): *The widows*, 10, points out that *μοναῖδος*, the Greek equivalent of the term *univira*, is very rarely mentioned for a woman married only once. Praise for such a concept seems to have been particularly Roman.

<sup>28</sup> One damaged inscription [CIL 16737a] refers to one partner who vows to remain true to the deceased and not to allow another to violate the marriage bed. Although the sex of the dedicator is unknown, the likelihood of this being a widow is high given the predominance of women in the other available evidence. The same idealism is nowhere asserted for men - in Roman Africa no husbands claim to have been married only once, and if African customs had any influence, some may have had more than one wife at the same time, or at least a concubine or two.

<sup>29</sup> See above p.122.

<sup>30</sup> In Petronius' *Satyricon* [111-112] Eumolpus tells the story of the Widow of Ephesus, how she could not be brought to part with the grave of her husband, but eventually ended up by making love with a soldier on duty in the very mausoleum of her dead husband.

<sup>31</sup> Probably one of the reasons why there are so many treatises on widowhood - Tertullian, John Chrysostom, Ambrose and Augustine.



At a more advanced age a woman presumably could also make her own choice of another marriage partner without too much interference.<sup>32</sup> Clearly Pudentilla managed to marry the man of her choosing despite the fact that the father of her first husband tried to keep the money in the family by making her marry his second son [*Apol.* 68].

At the same time there was always a possibility that, once she was no longer under the control of a husband, the widow was 'able to indulge her passion and lust' (Walcot 1991: 11). This pertained especially to women still in the prime of life. The estimated age of Pudentilla when she lost her husband (c. AD 145) is about thirty. To emphasize the respectability of Pudentilla's widowed state Apuleius borrows from the *univira* concept when he tells us that she remained a widow for thirteen years [*Apol.* 27] and that this state was only ended for medical reasons - that the cause of her declining health may be removed by her marriage seems to have been an entirely acceptable reason in the ancient context.<sup>33</sup> In court it is important for Apuleius to refute two implications regarding Pudentilla and himself. Firstly, that she married him as a sort of 'toyboy', given the difference in their ages.<sup>34</sup> Apuleius' accusers possibly played to the general distaste felt at the image of the woman in control, financially and by the *auctoritas* of her years.<sup>35</sup> And secondly, that she is a gullible woman who is in need of male relatives to protect her from fortune hunters such as Apuleius. In defending himself in court Apuleius must take great care that in denying the influence of magic he is not at the same time implying that Pudentilla had remarried for lustful purposes, hence, presumably, the whole medical exegesis placing a heavy emphasis on her failing health as the reason for marriage. The issue of her age (60 years claimed by the prosecution, 40 by the defence) concerns much more than a mere question of years. Apuleius puts her on the verge of child-bearing age.

Ladjimi-Sebaï (1977: 312) maintains that because of the idealization of the concept of the *univira* public opinion condemned the second marriage of Pudentilla. Since, however, having known only one husband was an instance of good fortune rather than merit, and the remarriage of both divorced and widowed women seems to have occurred regularly, it seems logical to assume that were it not for the real and underlying issues of the case against Apuleius, Pudentilla's remarriage for the second time would have excited no comment.<sup>36</sup> But repeated remarriage did make a woman more vulnerable to criticism. In Vandal Africa Luxorius comments adversely on the number of marriages of one woman, and from this epigram (quoted below) it is quite clear that attitudes to women perceived as rapacious (essentially the converse of the ideal that women married to provide men with heirs) had not changed much from the cynicisms of Juvenal and Martial expressed two centuries before in Rome.

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<sup>32</sup> A famous example from the late Roman Republic was Tullia's marriage to Dolabella against the wishes of her father, Cicero. Further Roman examples in TREGGIARI (1991c): 'Ideals and practicalities in matchmaking', 97.

<sup>33</sup> See discussion of health below, pp. 177-180.

<sup>34</sup> Apuleius' age is taken at about thirty-five (Walcot 1991: 17), where Pudentilla's is given by Apuleius' accusers as sixty, by Apuleius as barely forty [*Apol.* 67 and 89]. We may therefore assume an age for Pudentilla of just over forty years.

<sup>35</sup> Condemnatory words attributed to Solon [Plut., *Sol.* 20.5], who felt that a young man married to a rich older woman, growing plump in her house like a partridge, should be removed and wed to a younger woman. He was equally critical of marriages where old men married young girls, since it was unlikely that such a marriage would have issue. These are sentiments which would have been equally valid in the Roman world.

<sup>36</sup> Also GARDNER (1986a): *Women in Roman law and society*, 51: 'Widows, however, although lacking ritual purity and therefore not suitable for inclusion in the celebration of certain cults, seem to have attracted no disapproval in society at large by re-marrying, in contrast to the attitude that developed in the Christian empire'.



Because of the nature of this genre it is often difficult to know to what extent one can interpret these epigrams as evidence of observable behaviour. Undoubtedly here one also has to accept a certain amount of exaggeration and a focus on the particular rather than on the general:

Anacreontium in medicum inpotentem qui ter viduam duxit uxorem:

*Post tot repleta busta  
Et funerum catervas  
Ac disparem maritos  
Rugosa quos peremit  
Fatis anus sinistris,  
Tu nunc, chirurgus, quartus  
Coniunx vocare plaudis.  
Sed vivus es sepultus,  
Dum parte qua decebat*

*Nil continens mariti.  
Iam nosco cui videtur  
Nupsisse Paula rursus.  
Nulli! Quid ergo fecit?  
Mutare mox lugubrem  
Quam sumpserat cupivit  
Uxor nefanda vestem.  
Ut quartus atque - quintus  
Possit venire coniunx!*

Anacreontic poem to an impotent doctor who married a woman thrice a widow:

After so many tombs have been filled, after the horde of funerals, after so many husbands brought to their deaths by a wrinkled old woman, you, my medical friend, are pleased with yourself because you are now called her fourth husband. But, although alive, you too have been buried, for you do not possess the power properly to exercise your right as a husband. But I know whom Paula seems to have married again. Nobody! Why then did she do this? An abominable wife, she wanted to change in a hurry the mourning garb that she had put on so that a fourth husband might come along - and even a fifth! [Epigr. 23]

Clark (1993: 19-20) seems to feel that there was no general principle against the remarriage of women in Late Antiquity, and the Greek tradition also 'seems scarcely interested', but Greek tradition was inherently the opposite of the Roman and, far from idealizing the *univira*, accepted the remarriage of women as a matter of course. In one case the Council at Carthage attempted to prevent the remarriage of a woman deserted by her spouse, but its request for legislation to this effect was denied (Clark 1993: 27; [CCL 149.218]).

**Christian idealization of *castitas*, *pudicitia* and *fides***

Essentially there was not much difference between the pagan and Christian idealization of the virtues of chastity, modesty and fidelity for women. For ordinary married women social expectations relating to these virtues must have remained much the same, in spite of the sometimes extreme views expressed by Christian writers.<sup>37</sup> More and more emphasis was, however, placed on similar virtues for men. Augustine applauds what he understands as Cicero's views regarding these values for men:

*Intuere, obsecro te, et cerne quantis ibi laudibus frugalitas et continentia praedicetur et erga coniugale vinculum fides castique honesti ac probi mores...*

Look at them [the books *On the State* by Cicero], I pray you, and notice the praise with which frugality and self-control are extolled, and fidelity to the marriage bond, and chaste, honourable and upright character. [Ep. 91.3]

Christianity contained one major divergence from the pagan context in respect of chastity and fidelity. In the Christian world these could mean a life of extreme self discipline either individually or in a holy order. Cyprian's *De Habitu Virginum*, the earliest text detailing ascetical life for women, defines the life of the consecrated virgin by the renunciation of men and marriage. As yet there is no mention of the renunciation of property (although giving alms to the poor is advocated [11]) or of community living, even though the elements of a woman's society are there in the advice for the older women to teach the younger [24]. Our earliest

<sup>37</sup> There are some notable exceptions, particularly from Late Antiquity. Augustine relates an unusual incident where the entire Christian community of one of the hill-villages around Hippo made a vow of continence and adopted children from surrounding villages [De Haer. 87].



information on monastic life for women is provided by Augustine in the 4<sup>th</sup> century.

The Christian writers of Africa applied the concept of the *univira* more particularly to widowhood. Augustine's praise for his mother (... *fuera enim unius uxor*, ... 'for she had been the wife of one man' [*Conf.* 9]) is also the result of her husband having predeceased her. In *Ad Uxorem* Tertullian urges his wife to refrain from remarriage after his death, giving the following lengthy list of arguments against remarriage: marriage was less worthy than continence, the polygamy of the Patriarchs was no argument for multiple marriages, Paul disapproved of remarriage, a second marriage could only be motivated by concupiscence, the saints led lives of continence, even pagans held chastity in esteem, the death of one partner was an indication of God's will that the other remain single, and finally that the Church did not admit digamists to the episcopacy. Tertullian even viewed remarriage as a form of adultery:

*non aliud dicendum erit secundum matrimonium quam quasi species stupri*  
a second marriage will have to be termed no other than a species of fornication [De Exhort. Cast. 9.1]

### Continence within marriage

At Rome Melania the Younger was married off at fourteen but when she wished to persuade her seventeen year old husband Pinianus to embrace chastity, she had to agree to produce two children first [*Vita Mel.* 1.5, 6, 61]. This is a clear indication of how diametrically opposed Christian continence was to the Roman tradition of the perpetuation of the family line, particularly emphasized among the senatorial class. As bishop of Hippo Augustine took a more practical approach to continence within marriage among his parishioners [*De Bono Coniug.* 13.15 and his advice to Ecdicia, *Ep.* 262], but in other cases, for example that of Valerius Count of Africa, he commends him for his 'conjugal continence' (*pudicitia coniugali*) [*Ep.* 200.3]. While Christian teaching acknowledged the equality of virtue in men and women,<sup>38</sup> marital continence could only take place if the husband approved. We have no evidence of men desiring continence and giving in to their wives who wished otherwise. In fact, men resisting women's 'blandishments' is seen as a noble defiance against temptation. The closest example, although not from the marital context, is Ferrandus' version in the *Vita Fulgentii* of how Fulgentius' mother, Mariana, wept and called to her son outside the gates when he entered the monastery [4], and much praise is given for the son's resistance.<sup>39</sup> In Canon 12 the Council in Trullo held in 692 discussed the fact that bishops living in Africa and Libya in particular continued to live with their wives after consecration, causing a scandal in the Church.<sup>40</sup> The Council instructed them to cease this practice forthwith, but we have no further information as to whether they complied.

### Adultery and promiscuity

Ancient authors could as easily paint a woman a *meretrix* as a *matrona*, and criticism of women was usually

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<sup>38</sup> For example in his address *Ad Martyras*, Tertullian refers specifically to imprisoned women, exhorting them to be as brave as men - it is possible that this document was written for Perpetua's group, although the date of the document is uncertain (Barnes 1971: 32).

<sup>39</sup> Interestingly, as in the case of Perpetua, it is again the parent-child relationship which the 'devil' uses to test the strength of Christian faith.

<sup>40</sup> The contradictory attitude of the Church towards clerical celibacy is discussed by HERRIN (1992): "Femina Byzantina", 101 *passim*. In view of the sacrament of marriage, those who entered the clergy who were already married could not divorce their wives, but were encouraged to live celibately. Those who were ordained unmarried could not subsequently marry, and it appears that generally there was progression towards greater clerical celibacy for all.

focussed on their lack of *pudicitia*, for which the superficial signs were *infirmetas/imbecillitas* (weakness), *impotentia* (lack of control), and most especially *luxuria* (tendency to excess), all of which were in some way related to concupiscence. Female transgressions were publicly exposed.<sup>41</sup> An adulterous wife was not the ultimate disgrace for the cuckolded husband, as had been the case in Classical Greece, but a sign of a lack of vigilance on his part for having allowed such adulterous behaviour to flourish in the city, and to expose such behaviour in one's own wife was to avoid censure (Veyne 1987: 171-174). There are no obvious examples from pagan Africa outside the *Metamorphoses*,<sup>42</sup> but the Christian authors have plenty to say on the issue. Women who entertained men who were not their husbands are often left nameless but for the epithet 'woman of ill repute' (*malae famae mulierem*) by authors like Augustine [*Ep.* 65.1]. Augustine relates in another instance how a wife found in bed with a slave was dragged to the forum, but he himself notes the discrepancy that a husband consorting with a slave woman would have elicited no comment [*Serm.* 9.4]. Tertullian also refers to the relations conducted between free pagan women and their freedmen or slaves [*Ad Uxor.* 8.4],<sup>43</sup> and both Salvian and Quodvultdeus rail with fiery rhetoric against this and other sins of the flesh committed by the African Romans of both sexes (Clover 1978: 5). Christianity was certainly a novelty in condemning adultery by men and exhorting men to chastity.<sup>44</sup> In his letter to Count Bonifacius Augustine recommends:

*Ornet mores tuos pudicitia coniugalis, ornet sobrietas et frugalitas; valde enim turpe est, ut, quem non vincit homo, vincat libido et obruatur vino, qui non vincitur fero.*

Let your character be adorned by chastity in the marriage-bond, adorned by sobriety and moderation, for it is a very disgraceful thing that lust should overcome one whom man finds unconquerable, and that wine should overwhelm one whom the sword assails in vain. [*Ep.* 189.7]

Augustine even urged wives not to simply accept adultery in their husbands, but concubines were a generally accepted feature in society, as discussed in Chapter 5,<sup>45</sup> and, as Salvian points out, in a nominally Christian society it was quite normal for men who had legal marriages to keep women of lower status as concubines [*De Gub. Dei*, 4.5].

### ***Pietas* - Women's relationships with other members of the family**

Besides the virtues of chastity and fidelity which related more directly to male honour, a woman's affinity with the members of her own and her husband's family were also given attention in ancient society and formed part of her *pietas* - a dutiful respect towards family and the social norms of one's peers.<sup>46</sup> The desirability of this virtue in the African context is indicated by the number of times it is used in local inscriptions, for women used as commonly as *castissima* or *sanctissima*. As one of the praiseworthy aspects of his mother Monica, Augustine

<sup>41</sup> Compare also VEYNE (1987): *A history of private life*, 172, for other examples from the Roman(ized) context.

<sup>42</sup> In the *Metamorphoses* a number of adulterous wives come to a sorry end, but such episodes are traditional in the ancient novel (Bechtle 1995).

<sup>43</sup> Text quoted on p. 82.

<sup>44</sup> See for example Augustine's remarks in *Serm.* 38.78-9; 392.4 and 6.

<sup>45</sup> Augustine's experience with men of the congregation is related on pp. 79-80.

<sup>46</sup> In the *Laudatio Turiae* fulsome praise is given for precisely this aspect: *Cur dicam de tuorum cari]tate, familiae pietate, [c]um aequae matrem meam ac tuos parentes col[ueris eandemque quietem] illi quam tuis curaveris cetera innumerabilia habueris commun[ia] . . . ?* ('Why dwell on your love for your relatives, your devotion to your family? You have shown the same attention to my mother as you did to your own parents, and have taken care to secure an equally peaceful life for her as you did for your own people . . . ?') [31-33]. See also general aspects in SALLER (1988): 'Pietas, obligation and authority in the Roman family'.



singles out that she had repaid the duty she owed her parents (*mutuam vicem parentibus reddiderat*) [*Conf.* 9]. It was clearly considered desirable for a woman to get along with other members of the family, most especially if she shared her home with them. *Concordia* was therefore not only a quality desirable between husband and wife. It was customary in the Roman tradition for a married couple to set up their own home (Rawson 1986:8), but other arrangements were not unknown. Pudentilla allowed her son Pontianus and his wife to move into her home, but, although we are not informed as to the precise nature of the arrangement, this state of affairs did not last longer than two months [*Apol.* 87.6]. While such co-habitation was not an unusual situation, in Roman Africa, as elsewhere in the Roman world (Dixon 1988: 14; Nathan 2000:157-158) more cases are known where mothers were absorbed into the homes of their adult children, especially their adult sons.<sup>47</sup> Augustine's paternal grandmother lived with them in his youth, and Augustine himself lived with his mother and his concubine in one house; his friend, Nebridius, also returned to Africa at one point and lived with his mother in his country house near Carthage [*Ep.* 6]. In most of these cases the mothers were widowed, which made their sons *sui iuris* with their own independent households.<sup>48</sup> One simple but unusual inscription erected by Gaius Annii Optatus commemorates his mother-in-law, an indication that in antiquity, as at any other time in history, stereotypes must be balanced with individual circumstance and relationships:

CHERCEL (CAESAREA) [AE 1985. 920]  
D(IS) M(ANIBUS) | FLA(VIA) APAMA | VIX(IT) ANNI[S] L, C(AIUS) ANNIUS O(PTATUS?) | SOCRAE SUAE | BENE  
MERENT[ ] | FECIT. | S(IT) T(IBI) T(ERRA) L(EVIS).  
Consecrated to the departed. Flavia Apama lived 50 years. Lucius Gaius Annii Optatus (?) made this for his  
well-deserving mother-in-law. May the earth rest lightly on you.

Again we know far less about relations between daughters- and mothers-in-law, but from the following anecdote the latter were clearly to be regarded with respect. In the Tripolitanian city of Lepcis Magna during the 2<sup>nd</sup> century AD it was traditional for new brides to take part in an ancient ritual which was meant to establish the hierarchical line of authority. On the day after her marriage the bride had to send someone to her new mother-in-law to ask her for a pot. Her mother-in-law would refuse, saying that she did not have one (Olson 1994: 21). This may well have been a custom which Monica performed with her mother-in-law. At any rate from Augustine's description [*Conf.* 9.9] relations between the two women in Patricius' household were not always amicable.

## II. THE COMPORTMENT OF THE VIRTUOUS WOMAN: *PUDOR*, *DIGNITAS* AND THE LANGUAGE OF CLOTHING AND ADORNMENT

*Pudor* (modesty or decency) and *dignitas* (dignity) were the externals measured in terms of dress and deportment by which an individual woman's degree of self-control and conformity could be assessed, and the degree to which she could receive social approval and acceptance - the way she walked and where, who she talked to, her general appearance (hair, clothing, demeanour), her manner of speech, and other details of

<sup>47</sup> By comparison, in the census declarations of Roman Egypt HANSON (2000): 'Widows too young in their widowhood', 152, counts 13 of the 31 older widows living with their married sons and 6 with their unmarried sons, while only one lived with her married daughter. The remainder lived with other male relatives.

<sup>48</sup> An example from a Roman context was Aurelia, the mother of Julius Caesar [Plut., *Caes.* 7; 9; Suet., *Iul.* 13]. See GARDNER (1995): 'Gender-role assumptions in Roman law', on some of the *do ut des* aspects of this relationship, also the insinuation that the situation may have been tolerated because she was a very wealthy woman.

observable behaviour.<sup>49</sup> These outwards signs were seen as representations of the inner presence of the qualities of modesty, decency, propriety and moderation, and all the dress codes for Roman women symbolized in one way or another the quality of purity - the innocence of the young girl, the virginity of the new bride, the modesty of the wife, or the fidelity of the widow. A Roman matron could complement her husband's reputation and his career by her manipulation of external attributes.

### **Public behaviour**

Despite some instances of excessive control of a *paterfamilias* in Republican times,<sup>50</sup> the Roman African woman during the Empire was free to move about in public, visiting the baths or attending the games - but she had to do this in a certain manner. A well-bred woman for example never went about in public without a servant escort, preferably several servants, if Apuleius is to be believed [*Metam.* 2.2]. In the more restrictive Byzantine period, when Antonina, the wife of the Byzantine general Belisarius, accompanied her husband to Africa, Procopius mentions that, at one stage in the campaign, the infantry with the wife of Belisarius came up and together they all went on to Carthage [*De Bell. Vand.* 3.20.1]. Antonina may have been able to travel without the company of her husband, but certainly not alone. Undoubtedly she would also have had a female entourage with her (which is probably not relevant enough in the context for Procopius to mention it).

When a woman did go out in public she was meant to walk in a certain manner. In *De Virginibus Velandis* [3.4] Tertullian relates how some pagan women were scandalized and complained to their husbands because other (Christian) women walked in a different manner to themselves ('*Scandalizamur*', *inquiunt*, '*quia aliter aliae incedunt*').<sup>51</sup> Even a trip to the baths was open to interpretation. Tertullian infers from the more ample paraphernalia young women carried to the baths that this was a sign that they were leaving their girlhood behind them [*De Virg. Vel.* 12.5].

Before the restrictions of Late Antiquity on women attending events in the circus or amphitheatre,<sup>52</sup> female members of the local élite were probably not unusual in the audience. We can deduce from Perpetua's knowledge (related in her dream narrative) of the oil rubdowns typical of wrestling matches that she was no stranger to public entertainment. Tertullian, who strongly disapproved of any Christian attending the pagan rituals of the circus and theatre, mentions another Christian woman who attended the games in the amphitheatre (which he believes was instrumental in her being possessed by an evil spirit) [*De Spect.* 26], and it is clear from other comments in the same text [17] that women were regularly present in the audience. In this work [22] Tertullian also expresses strong disapproval of what was already an ancient misogynistic topic - women who

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<sup>49</sup> The significance of Roman dress and adornment for women is already referred to by the tribune L. Valerius in 195 BC, when he defends women's right to display their own 'marks of honour': 'No offices, no priesthods, no triumphs, no decorations, no gifts, no spoils of war can come to them; elegance of appearance, adornment, apparel - these are the woman's badges of honour' (*non magistratus nec sacerdotia nec triumphi nec insignia nec dona aut spolia bellica iis contingere possunt; munditiae et ornatus et cultus, haec feminarum insignia sunt*) [Livy 34.7.8-9].

<sup>50</sup> Valerius Maximus referred to on p. 5.

<sup>51</sup> A clear illustration of how women themselves were strong supporters of the social codes set for their own sex.

<sup>52</sup> The *Novellae* 22.25 (AD 535) of Justinian were intended to prevent women from attending plays and man and beast contests (MacMullen 1986b: 329). It is possible that chariot racing was also frowned upon, since Procopius [*De Bell.* 1.24.6] reports from Constantinople that the women who had been unable to attend the races later joined in the riots (Clark 1993: 129).



surrendered their bodies to the gladiators of the arena.<sup>53</sup> Ancient and modern ideology for women may disapprove of the 'weaker sex' being exposed to violence,<sup>54</sup> let alone displaying a predilection for it, but in ancient Roman Africa, as now, women were often eager spectators of bloody events: 'Greeks, Jews and women' are singled out for comment in the account of the martyrdom of Pionius [3.10], watching Pionius and his companions being dragged in chains to the forum on the Byrsa hill for their execution.

Other conduct which betokened female modesty and propriety related to indoor behaviour, for example dining. At formal dinners seating was a crucial determinant of relative status, both within the family hierarchy, and beyond it. During the Republic and early days of the Empire, women of the higher status groups were seated on high backed chairs while the men reclined at the dinner table. This arrangement was meant to be a reflection of a woman's modesty and subordination to the superior status of the men, and, as Bradley (1998: 47) points out, 'it kept her confined, isolated and observable'. Then for a woman to recline in the manner of men would be a sure sign that she was a prostitute. The accompanying funerary *stele* shows a husband reclining and his



FIGURE 7.1 FUNERARY STELE OF MAN AND WIFE

wife seated decorously at his side.<sup>55</sup> The date of this tombstone is, however, quite late, from the Severan era (Romanelli 1981: 294). Other evidence from this period indicates that women of status were now reclining in the manner of men, although the particular occasion of the dinner probably also determined whether women reclined or even if they were present at all.

Bradley (1998: 47) quotes a large number of examples of dining customs from the Roman world - while in some cases the women who were reclining were prostitutes (Cytheris at a dinner Cicero attended), some were not (Caligula's wife and sisters, Agrippina and Nero, Scintilla in Petronius' *Satyricon* [67.5]). It is highly likely that the image we see in Figure 7.1 is further evidence of the upwardly mobile imitating the outward forms of the élite which for that class had already fallen into disuse. In the *Metamorphoses* [1.22-23] Apuleius implies criticism of husbands who reclined while their wives sat on chairs at their feet since this is precisely what the boorish Milo does, whose wife sits on a chair at his feet before the empty table until she is ordered to make room for the guest, Lucius. Apuleius possibly expected condemnation of this conservative behaviour of a husband

<sup>53</sup> See for example Juvenal [*Sat.* 6.82; 103-113]. Prudentius comments on the Vestal Virgins' reaction to the spilling of blood in the arena, which stirred some to sexual lust [*Contra Orat. Symm.* 2].

<sup>54</sup> See for example Tertullian's criticism of fathers who protect their daughters from dirty language but expose them to much worse in language and gesture by taking them to the theatre [*De Spect.* 21] (quoted on p. 60).

<sup>55</sup> For other example see *CIL* 23872.



towards his wife from his contemporary readership. Tertullian [*Ad Uxor.* 2.6] makes reference to women's dining habits as part of his general discontent with what he considers to be the laxness of modern women's morals. His disapproval is aimed at their reclining but also at where they do so: 'she will recline at table with her husband, in clubs and often in taverns' (*discumbet cum marito, saepe in sodalitiis, saepe in popinis*). Tertullian may not have approved of reclining for women, but clearly many were doing so, at home and in public. Evidence from Thanae (3<sup>rd</sup> or 4<sup>th</sup> century AD) shows a couple depicted as banqueters surrounded by the images of plenty associated with the afterlife. C. Iulius Serenus is reclining on a couch, above a reclining Numitoria Saturnina. Judging by the expensive mosaic both were clearly individuals of some local status.

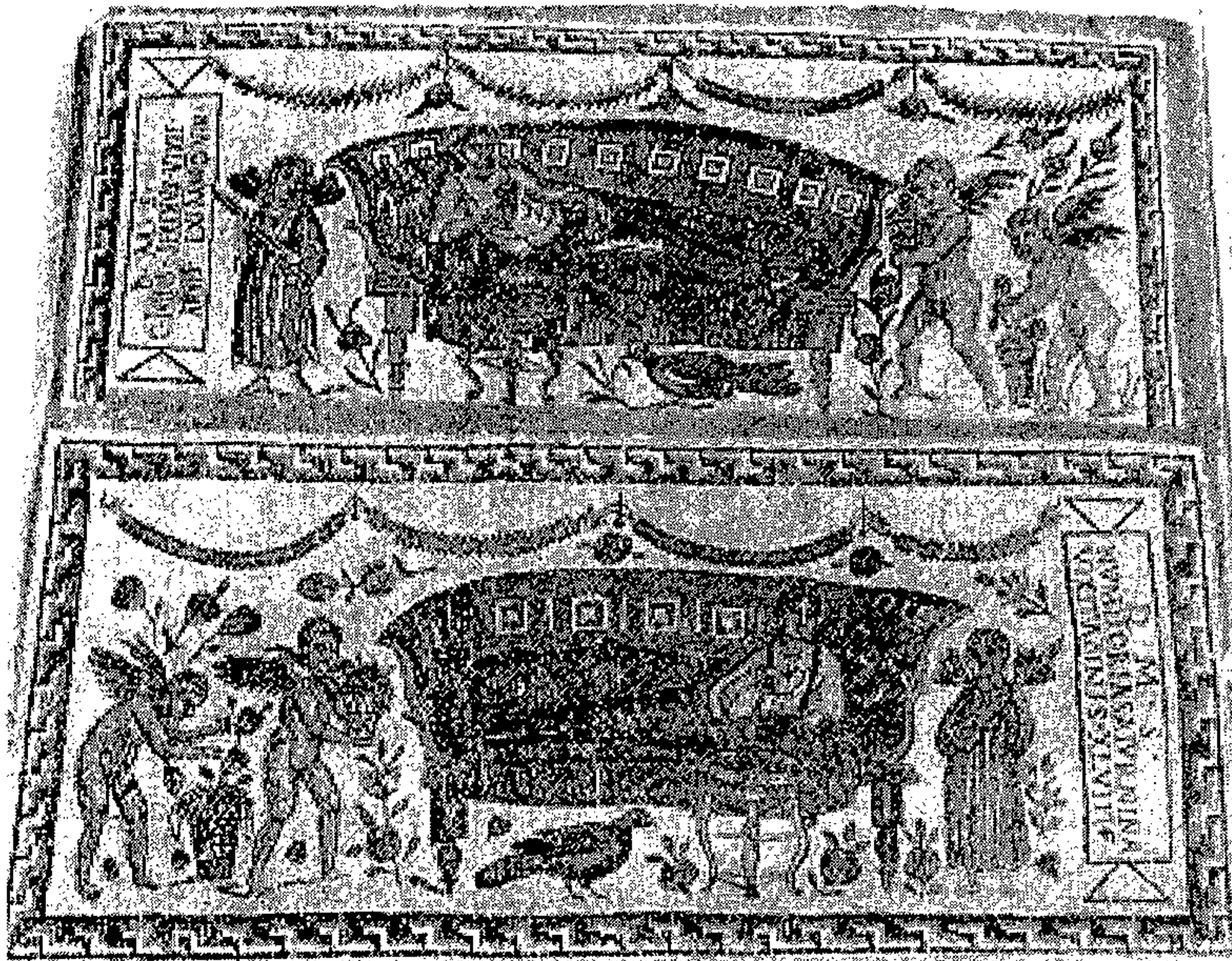


FIGURE 7.2 DECEASED COUPLE RECLINING AT BANQUET. THANAE, 3<sup>RD</sup> OR 4<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY

For Christians in Tertullian's day it was customary for everyone to remain seated, regardless of sex [*Apologet.* 39.16-19]. It is possible that the Christian habit of sitting at the table derived from the lower orders of society, for whom this had long been customary,<sup>56</sup> as we see from a mosaic found in Carthage dating from the middle of the 4<sup>th</sup> century (Figure 9.5) showing a banqueting scene where all the banqueters are seated on high backed couches around long tables for the food and drink (although the mosaic is badly damaged, there appear to be no women in the scene apart from the dancing girls in the centre). Reclining did not become obsolete, however, since Procopius in the 6<sup>th</sup> century still mentions reclining couches for dining (*τὰς στιβάδας*) [*De Bell. Vand.* 4.28.14].

As a last point on the ideal of modest female behaviour it can be noted that none of the Roman African sculptures of women, not even 'La elegante suscettibile' illustrated in Figure 1, have even the vestige of a smile,

<sup>56</sup> Columella [*De Re Rust.* 11.1.19] recommends that a farm bailiff should recline only on religious feast days, implying that normally men of servile stock sit to eat (Bradley 1998: 39).



let alone a seductive look - they are without exception grave.<sup>57</sup> Their gravity reflects the view of the Roman matron, the mother of future generations of Romans. Eroticism was not an option in this context.<sup>58</sup> In pagan and Christian writings that which was interpreted as flirtatious and coquettish behaviour in a *matrona* was heavily criticized. Far rather the discretion (*prudentia*) attributed to Sabina from Thugga [CIL 26 673; AE 1995, 1793].<sup>59</sup> In the martyrdom of Perpetua her ability to look directly at the spectators 'putting down everyone's stare by her own intense gaze' (*vigore oculorum deiciens omnium conspectum*) [*Passio P & F* 18.2] was highly unusual and 'immodest' behaviour for a Roman *matrona*, from whom downcast eyes and a retiring demeanour were expected. It is this type of behaviour that probably earned another female African martyr the description of a 'stubborn and insolent woman' (*dura es et contemptrix*) by the proconsul Anullinus at her trial [*Passio S. Crisp.* 1.5].

### **Public appearance: adornment of the body, in modesty or excess**

In appearance the ideal Roman woman was typified by the wife of the Emperor, who, whatever the reality may have been, was in her public image closely associated with Roman notions of respectability and *dignitas*. Not a great deal of variation on this theme is discernible in the statues and busts of the women of Roman Africa. Roman African women depicted in sculpture, especially full-length statues and reliefs, adopt the same pose of *pudicitia* or modesty, often drawing the *palla* (the lightweight cloak or shawl draped over upper part of body) over their heads, or even holding part of it in front of their faces.<sup>60</sup> One could not imagine any of these women walking with anything but the small steps mentioned by Salvian [*De Gub. Dei* 7.19]. *Pudor* was also projected in the simplicity of appearance in sculpture, at least for the first two centuries of the Empire. Clear associations were made between the elaborate over-adornment of the body as the activity of an experienced woman, even a prostitute, on the one hand, and the simplicity of the virgin who was ignorant and innocent of such arts, on the other. In ideal terms therefore, for women's social codes it was therefore not a very great step to the demands of modesty defined by Christianity. The realities of displaying wealth and status were, however, another matter.

With the Christian influence it becomes clear that the attitude to the body and bodily functions assumes a new modesty, particularly in the Late Empire.<sup>61</sup> The importance of dress and its associations is indicated by the numerous texts which Tertullian devoted to this theme, in one of his works even going so far as to attach a spiritual connotation to it.<sup>62</sup> In his letter to Ecdicia on the subject of continence and *obsequium* [*Ep.* 262],

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<sup>57</sup> BANDINELLI (1966): *The buried city: excavations of Leptis Magna*, 50, surmises that the young woman depicted in Figure 1 may be Greek-speaking, since her statue was found in the temple of Sarapis in Lepcis Magna, where most of the inscriptions are in that language since the cult was centred on Alexandria.

<sup>58</sup> The portraits of Roman men show the same *gravitas*.

<sup>59</sup> A rarely mentioned virtue in Roman African women. One other instance in CIL 2185: [*cuius exim*]ia prudentia laudatur.

<sup>60</sup> LA FOLLETTE (1994): 'The costume of the Roman bride', 55, believes that the covering of the head may go back to an ancient notion that a woman's sexual powers are concentrated in her hair, a belief still prevalent in the Middle East.

<sup>61</sup> On Christian modesty in dress and demeanour see the general comments by CLARK (1993): *Women in Late Antiquity*, 111-118; BROWN (1987): *Late Antiquity*, 245-246.

<sup>62</sup> Tertullian's works on dress are *De Pallio*, *De Cultu Feminarum*, *De Virginibus Velandis*, *De Aaron Vestibus* (the latter is lost, but possibly referred to the dress of the high priest). He associates the change from the Roman *toga* and *stola* to the simple *pallium* of the Greek philosopher with the changing customs of mankind, contrasted to the constancy of God. In addition the *pallium* is promoted as the distinctively Christian dress, although it fell into disuse by the 4<sup>th</sup> century as ordinary apparel (its use continued in art).



Augustine refers to Biblical context [*1 Timothy* 2.9 and *1 Peter* 3.3], citing Paul's approval of women's modest apparel and the condemnation of further ornamentation of dress and hair. Augustine seems to have recommended a type of dress befitting the Christian matron which clearly bears some resemblance to the dress of widows in Roman tradition, since he states that husbands objected to their wives wearing this form of dress while they themselves were still alive [*Ep.* 262.9]. In Augustine's opinion a wife should dress to please her husband, as this was a form of respect which she owed him. When Augustine is discussing the form of dress proper for women who had chosen a monastic life, he puts into words why modesty in dress was as desirable for the Roman matron as it was for a woman who had chosen a life of God:

*In incessu, in statu, in habitu, in omnibus motibus vestris nihil fiat, quod inlicitat cuiusquam libidinem, sed quod vestram deceat sanctitatem.*

In walking, in standing, in deportment, in all your movements let nothing be done that might attract the desire of anyone, but let everything be in keeping with your holy character. [*Ep.* 211.10]

Tertullian defines *castitatis* for women as meaning not desiring to be desired [*De Cult. Fem.* 2.2.1], and likewise Cyprian discourages women from adorning their hair or using any artifice to beautify themselves - she has no husband to please, nor does she need to seek one out:

*neque enim virginem fas est ad speciem formae suae comi aut de carne et de eius pulchritudine gloriari, cum nulla sit illis magis quam adversus carnem conluctatio et vincendi corporis ac domandi destinata certatio.*

And in truth it is not right for a virgin to adorn herself to set off her charms, nor to glory in her body and its beauty, since there is no struggle greater for such maidens than that against the flesh, and no battle more obstinate than that of conquering and subduing the body. [*De Hab. Virg.* 5]

But for Tertullian chastity was a lost art [*De Exhort. Cast.* 1], and Cyprian, too, complains of the broken vows of virgins who had consecrated their lives to Christ [*Ep.* 29].

Ironically, however, it is in this period from which we have the most writings about neglecting the physical for the spiritual that we perceive a growing tendency for more ornate clothing and earthly splendour. While ascetics in Africa and across the Empire were eschewing even the most basic care of their physical body, others indulged every whim. Egypt during this period had many ascetics - in the rest of Africa they were not as rigorous or extreme, and the hardships endured by Fulgentius or even Melania during her African sojourn are really quite unremarkable when compared to the self-denial of the desert fathers. On the other hand there is quite a lot of evidence that the well-to-do spent a lot of money on luxury. During the 5<sup>th</sup> century the Vandal conquerors indulged in the pleasures of wealth, from luxurious villas to silk clothing [Procop., *De Bell. Vand.* 4.6.6-8]. There does not seem to be a great deal of evidence for the Arian morality which Salvian attributes to them throughout his work. Byzantine tradition also favoured ornate clothing and adornment, although we have almost no direct evidence for Byzantine customs for Africa:

'Both men and women, for instance, curled their hair artificially or dyed it blonde or tried to have it glitter by rubbing it either with oil or various perfumes. There were those also, both men and women, who dyed their hair in order to hide their age. Women painted and thinned their eyebrows, dyed their eyelids and eyelashes, and painted their cheeks and lips red. They trimmed their nails, tried to keep their teeth white, wore earrings, necklaces, golden chains, rings and bracelets.' (Charanis 1973: 69).

In Africa particularly there was an increase in the number of private baths and latrines,<sup>63</sup> while at the same time

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<sup>63</sup> THÉBERT (1987): 'Private life and domestic architecture in Roman Africa', 380, points out that this was also part of the development of distance between the aristocracy and the masses: 'Could the man who in the morning sat enthroned in his private apse to receive dependents in the afternoon join those same dependents in the public swimming pool, without clothes to indicate his rank? Private baths made it possible to maintain the necessary social distance.' Baths for the general populace continued to exist, however. Procopius for



'bathing as a luxurious activity was clearly against the Christian notion of spirituality achieved through the negation of the body and the senses' (Yegül 1992: 317).<sup>64</sup>

**Roman African attitudes to modesty, sexuality and nudity.**

Brown (1987: 245) comments that Roman society was not one bound together by the 'implicit democracy of sexual shame'. The visits to public baths and the prevalence of statues of naked or semi-naked gods and goddesses, and in some cases their identification with real individuals, bear this out.<sup>65</sup> From the late 1<sup>st</sup> century onwards deceased women were increasingly honoured by mythological portraits, for which Venus was a particular favourite, symbolizing the fecundity of the Roman matron (D'Ambra 2000: 101). Bonfante (1989) and D'Ambra (2000: 102) argue that the adoption of the nude or semi-nude goddess body type did not shock Roman society because it was seen almost as a costume and recognized as an artistic convention. The hairstyles are usually the first indication that the figure is not Venus herself but a particular individual assuming her attributes. Figures 7.19 - 7.21 combine the body of Venus with the hairstyle of Julia Domna (Venus' traditional hairstyle is depicted as centrally parted waves or with large curls on top (D'Ambra 2000: 102)). The complex hairstyles or wigs were a reflection of status, remaining true to 'a typically Roman preoccupation with physical appearance as a uniform that establishes rank', but they also 'dressed' the figure in a way that emphasized the fact that the nudity was only an illusion (D'Ambra 2000: 105).<sup>66</sup>

Before the advent of Christianity nudity in itself was not a source of shame: 'Nor is there anything surprising in the long survival of indifference to nudity in Roman public life.... Athletic nudity remained a mark of status for the wellborn... As for women, the social shame of exposure to the wrong person, rather than the fact of exposure itself, was the principal anxiety' (Brown 1987: 9-10).<sup>67</sup> Being stripped of one's clothing in the arena would probably constitute 'exposure to the wrong person'. One can only imagine the feelings of Perpetua, a Roman woman brought up to regard modesty as a cardinal virtue, who with her fellow martyrs was stripped of her clothing in the arena.<sup>68</sup> Denuding a female victim for the arena was customary, and before they were displayed to the crowds they were draped in diaphanous net (Shaw 1993: 9). In the account of the deaths of Perpetua and Felicitas we are told that the crowd was shocked not so much by the nudity of the women, but by the fact that:

*...respiciens puellam delicatam, alteram a parturecentem stillantibus mammis. Ita revocatae et discinctis indutae.*  
... they saw that one was a delicate young girl and the other was a woman fresh from childbirth with the milk still dripping from her breasts. And so they were brought back and dressed in unbelted tunics. [Passio P & F 20.2-3]

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example mentions such baths restored by Justinian at Carthage [*De Aedif.* 6.5.10].

<sup>64</sup> As a place of medicinal value and healing it was not frowned upon, however. Ironically the Islamic world continued the practice of bathing during the Middle Ages while contemporary Europeans eschewed bathing as 'Turkish' and heathen (Yegül 1992: 318f).

<sup>65</sup> According to Cassius Dio [58.2.4] when Livia was unexpectedly confronted with naked men (presumably at the baths) she prevented them from being put to death by commenting that to chaste women such men were no different from statues.

<sup>66</sup> A detailed study of the Aphrodite statues in social context has been done by NEUMER-PFAU (1982): *Studien zur Ikonographie und Gesellschaftlichen Funktion hellenistischer Aphrodite Statuen*. On the use of the body type of Venus for statues of real women see D'AMBRA (2000): 'Nudity and adornment in female portrait sculpture of the second century AD'.

<sup>67</sup> SALISBURY (1997): *Perpetua's passion*, 77, points out that the Latin *nudus* or naked also carried the connotation of 'rough' or 'uncouth' which she interprets to mean that the Romans saw nudity in certain contexts as indecent.

<sup>68</sup> See the discussion on the contradictory aspects of social mores and the demands of martyrdom in TILLEY (1991): 'One woman's body: repression and expression in the *Passio Perpetuae*'.



Nudity was therefore shocking only in certain contexts where specific ideal notions were in play.<sup>69</sup> Perpetua's further behaviour is described by her editor in terms of ideal matronly modesty, but with appropriate Christian editorializing:

*Prior Perpetua iactata est et concidit in lumbos. Et ubi sedit, tunicam a latere discissam ad velamentum femoris reduxit pudoris potius memor quam doloris. De hinc acu requisita et dispersos capillos infibulavit; non enim decebat martyram sparsis capillis pati, ne in sua gloria plangere videretur.*

First the heifer tossed Perpetua and she fell on her back. Then sitting up she pulled down the tunic that was ripped along the side so that it covered her thighs, thinking more of her modesty than of her pain. Next she asked for a pin to fasten her untidy hair; for it was not right that a martyr should die with her hair in disorder, lest she might seem to be mourning in her hour of triumph. [Passio P & F 20.3-5]

To complete their dishonour the chosen animal by which the two women were to die was a *ferocissima vacca*, a mad heifer. Shaw (1993: 7) believes that since for women a bull was usually chosen for killing known adulteresses as a symbol of their sexual dishonour, the martyrs represented a 'different sort of sexuality'. The use of something analogous to the bull implied sexual shame, but the fact that the animal was a cow implied that 'they were not 'real women' enough to be guilty of adultery'.<sup>70</sup> A virgin heifer was also the animal sacrificed to the virgin goddess Minerva [Arnob., *Adv. Nat.* 7.22], which may have been the other reason for its choice.

A puritan attitude to nudity was not peculiar to Christianity, however. In the more moralistic Flavian period erotica in the baths at Pompeii were covered over just before the eruption in AD 79 (Boatwright 2000: 69).<sup>71</sup> Socially modesty at the baths was maintained by separate bathing hours or establishments for men and women.<sup>72</sup> Carthage had massive baths, with separate sections for men and women (Manton 1988: 103-4), as did the baths at Thamusida at the western extreme of Mauretania (MacKendrick 1980: 313), and a women's gallery was excavated within the baths at Lepcis Magna (Bandinelli 1966: 108). Mixed bathing had been banned by the emperors before and after Septimius Severus,<sup>73</sup> and there was even further differentiation, according to Valerius Maximus [9.4] and the *Scriptores Historia Augusta* [Gall. 17.8], whereby the élite of Carthage bathed separately from the plebs (which Valerius Maximus finds to be an indication of their *insolentia*, since in Rome all classes bathed indiscriminately). Such differentiation continued into Late Antiquity in cases where baths were often attached to monasteries, one for the clergy and one for the poor.

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<sup>69</sup> See also Victor Vitensis [*Hist. Persec.* 3.21], who notes that women, especially the noble, were tortured naked in full view of the public, 'contrary to the laws of nature' (*mulieres et praecipue nobiles contra iura naturae nudas omnino in facie publica cruciabant*). He gives a description of the shame of one such woman, Dionysia, with suitable Christian moralizing.

<sup>70</sup> LEFKOWITZ (1981): 'The motivations for St Perpetua's martyrdom', 55-56, and CLARK (1993): *Women in Late Antiquity*, 57, point to the erotic content of hagiography wherein women martyrs (for example Prudentius' Eulalia and Agnes [*Peristeph.* 3.14; *PL* 60.341-357, 580-590]) suffer extremes of torture which are often sexual. Lefkowitz explains this as a reassertion of male domination in cases where the women have transgressed against male authority, for example in their rejection of motherhood.

<sup>71</sup> According to SOREN (1990): *Carthage*, 249, images of Venus were displayed in the baths in Africa 'to remind people not to think unchaste thoughts and not be tempted by the sight of nudity' - if this were their purpose it is unlikely that it had the desired effect. Art works were certainly very much a part of the African baths, particularly images of Venus, who, as DUNBABIN (1989): 'Baiaurum grata voluptas', 24, points out, was associated with the world of beauty and luxury which 'lay at the heart of the bath aesthetic'. She also points out that none of the Church Fathers inveigh against the pagan elements so obviously displayed in the bathing establishments - 'enjoyment of works of art was considered an essential part of the experience of bathing' (1989: 9).

<sup>72</sup> Cyprian's *De Habitu Virginum* implies that these different institutions were in place at the same time when he warns the virgins consecrated to Christ not to visit the 'common baths' where they might be seen by men [19], but rather to bathe where only women are present [21].

<sup>73</sup> Hadrian prohibited mixed bathing by law - an indication that it was occurring despite separate hours for men and women or separate establishments. The 4<sup>th</sup> century Syrian writer Epiphanius condemned Roman baths because men and women bathed there together [*Pan. Haeret.* 30.7] (Yegül 1992: 317).



Although the Church Fathers regarded the baths as places of frivolity<sup>74</sup> - and this certainly was their theme in decoration (Dunbabin 1989) - it seems it was only ascetics who chose not to bathe. Although Tertullian finds the baths filled with idols, he seems to regard them as a necessity of life [*Apologet.* 42; *De Spect.* 8]. Augustine includes the baths as one of the typical enjoyments of life and visited them himself [*Contra Acad.* 1.1.2]. Some non-African Christian writings urged women to avoid the baths and nudity, even before other women, while a consecrated virgin should avoid looking at her own body [*PG* 28.264] (Clark 1993: 65). Augustine did advocate bathing for monastics [*Reg. Inform.* 5.5] and that women monastics should bath at least once a month without complaint.<sup>75</sup>

### **The language of clothing and adornment among the native African and Punic populations**

It is impossible to discern from our evidence what the relationship between female virtue and outward appearance was for native African tribes, or even if we can attribute a homogenous attitude to them. Herodotus implies tribal distinctions in the many ways in which both men and women did their hair, for example among the Adyrmachidae women wore their hair long, while the Macae men grew their hair long only in the middle and shaved the rest [4.168; 175]. Some sculptures attest to this custom to shave the head except for a long braid in the centre, at the end of which the native Africans attached an amulet.<sup>76</sup> Their belief that hair contained supernatural power may have been influenced by the Punic concept (Charles-Picard 1954: 14). Strabo implies vanity among the Mauri men, who did not touch one another so as not to disturb each others' hair [17.3.7], a story that seems hardly credible (he says nothing about their women). If the story has any veracity it may be connected to the belief in the special powers residing in hair.<sup>77</sup>

In the same context Herodotus refers twice to anklets or ankle rings worn by women, either in leather [4.176] or in bronze [4.168] which he interprets as trophies of their conquests in love. Another distinctive element in African jewellery is illustrated by Bates (1970: 131-2) in various types of collars worn by Libyan men and women. By the Roman period other influences had made themselves felt even among the Garamantes in the Fezzan: the shadowy figure of Tin Hinan was buried in the 4<sup>th</sup> century AD at Abalessa with seven gold bracelets, eight silver bracelets and other jewellery, some of it of Roman origin.<sup>78</sup>

As far as dress is concerned, illustrations in Bates' work on the Eastern Libyans (1970: 129) show women wearing skirts which fall to the ground in pleats. In one of these it appears that the torso was left bare, but since this is the only example this is probably misleading. Evidence from the Roman period shows a Libyan woman in a full length dress falling in the same pleats (Bates 1970: plate V), which is also the apparel of a woman in

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<sup>74</sup> The opportunity for immorality offered by the possibility of men and women bathing together is a favoured theme of moralist writers (Dunbabin 1989: 7).

<sup>75</sup> Melania the Elder was reported to have said at 60 that she washed only her fingertips [*Pallad., De Hist. Laus.* 55] while Paula apparently held the view that a clean dress was the sign of an unclean mind [*Jerome, Ep.* 108.20].

<sup>76</sup> This hairstyle is illustrated by a bust from the Antonine baths dated to the 2<sup>nd</sup> century AD (Charles-Picard 1954: Plate II between pp. 88-89). Similar hairstyles can still be seen among the Berbers in modern times (Charles-Picard 1954: 14).

<sup>77</sup> See also p. 141 n. 80.

<sup>78</sup> Roman graves very seldom contain jewellery since Roman women were not buried with such items unless their impending nuptials had been cut short by death, and the jewels had probably been a part of her dowry (Oliver 2000: 117).



another primitive representation illustrated in Chapter 9 (Figure 9.7).<sup>79</sup> In two 4<sup>th</sup> century mosaics from Zliten in Tripolitania (Figures 9.8 and 9.9), one mosaic of a threshing scene shows dark-skinned men naked except for their loin cloths, while the accompanying panel depicts the women working the fields fully dressed. Other iconographical material (such as Figure 7.31), which intimates African roots by the fact that the woman carries a basket on top of her head, although this is common for peasant women in other cultures, too) also show women fully dressed in simple belted tunics. It would seem, although the evidence is slim, that the Libyan women were 'covered up' quite early in their history, while the men continued to wear loincloths. The women's dress may indicate Punic influence, since the Punic style of dress for both men and women was a long, finely pleated muslin robe gathered at the waist by a belt. Charles-Picard (1964: 173) describes a woman on a Punic stele at the open-air museum at Carthage: 'The woman, who has tightly waved hair, wears two super-posed gowns, the lower one decorated down the centre with a triple-embroidered insertion of cloth as in archaic Greek costumes', rather like that illustrated in Figure 7.3. It is debatable to what extent the Punic styles were influenced by Greek and Roman fashions before the 1<sup>st</sup> century BC. The appearance of women in Punic sculpture certainly shows some similarities to their Graeco-



FIGURE 7.3 CARTHAGINIAN STATUETTE  
OF THE NEO-PUNIC PERIOD

Roman equivalents, but these also extend to pose and general execution of the figures, as in the example of the Carthaginian woman in Figure 7.4 overleaf, which could imply that the similarities are stylistic elements introduced by the artist rather than realistic representations of what people wore at the time. Even the Carthaginian woman's hairstyle in Figure 7.4, which leaves the forehead free and a lock of hair over each shoulder, looks very similar to the Roman style first made fashionable by Augustus' sister Octavia and later adopted by Livia (see below). Our only literary evidence on the hairstyles of Punic women unfortunately has something of a legendary flavour: they sacrificed their locks during the siege of Carthage in 149 BC to make catapult slings [App., *Pun.* 93], from which we can at least deduce that they wore their hair long.<sup>80</sup>

Punic women are also sometimes portrayed wearing a large type of collar, and occasionally earrings falling to the shoulder. The collar was also worn by a Roman African woman of Late Antiquity (Figure 7.25), although there are no later portraits of women wearing earrings. One of the items mentioned by Charles-Picard *et al* (1961: 141) is the Punic anklet, another similarity with the African tradition, and which is also mentioned by Tertullian [*De Cult. Fem.* 2.13.4] and Manilius [*Astron.* 5.519] as one of the items commonly worn by women

<sup>79</sup> We can infer from a remark in Herodotus that Libyan women wore a red-stained fringed leather girdle (the modern *raht*, according to BATES (1979): *The Eastern Libyans*, 128 n.3), possibly similar to that worn by the Punic statuette in Figure 7.3 above.

<sup>80</sup> The Phoenicians believed that the supernatural power of some individuals resided in their hair (like the Biblical story of Samson) particularly in preserved locks of hair (Charles-Picard *et al* 1961: 132-133). For more detailed discussion, LEVINE (1995): 'The gendered grammar of ancient Mediterranean hair'.



during their own time, and which is still worn by Bedouin women today. Of course in the process of assimilation Punic forms were also abandoned in favour of Roman ones. When Tertullian describes the strait tunic and cloak typically worn by Carthaginian men, in a work which chastizes the fickleness of fashions and tastes, he regrets the fact that:

*pallium tamen generaliter, vestrum immemores, etiam denotatis*

the mantle which used to be worn by all ranks and conditions among you, you not only are unmindful of, but even deride.

[*De Pall.* 1]

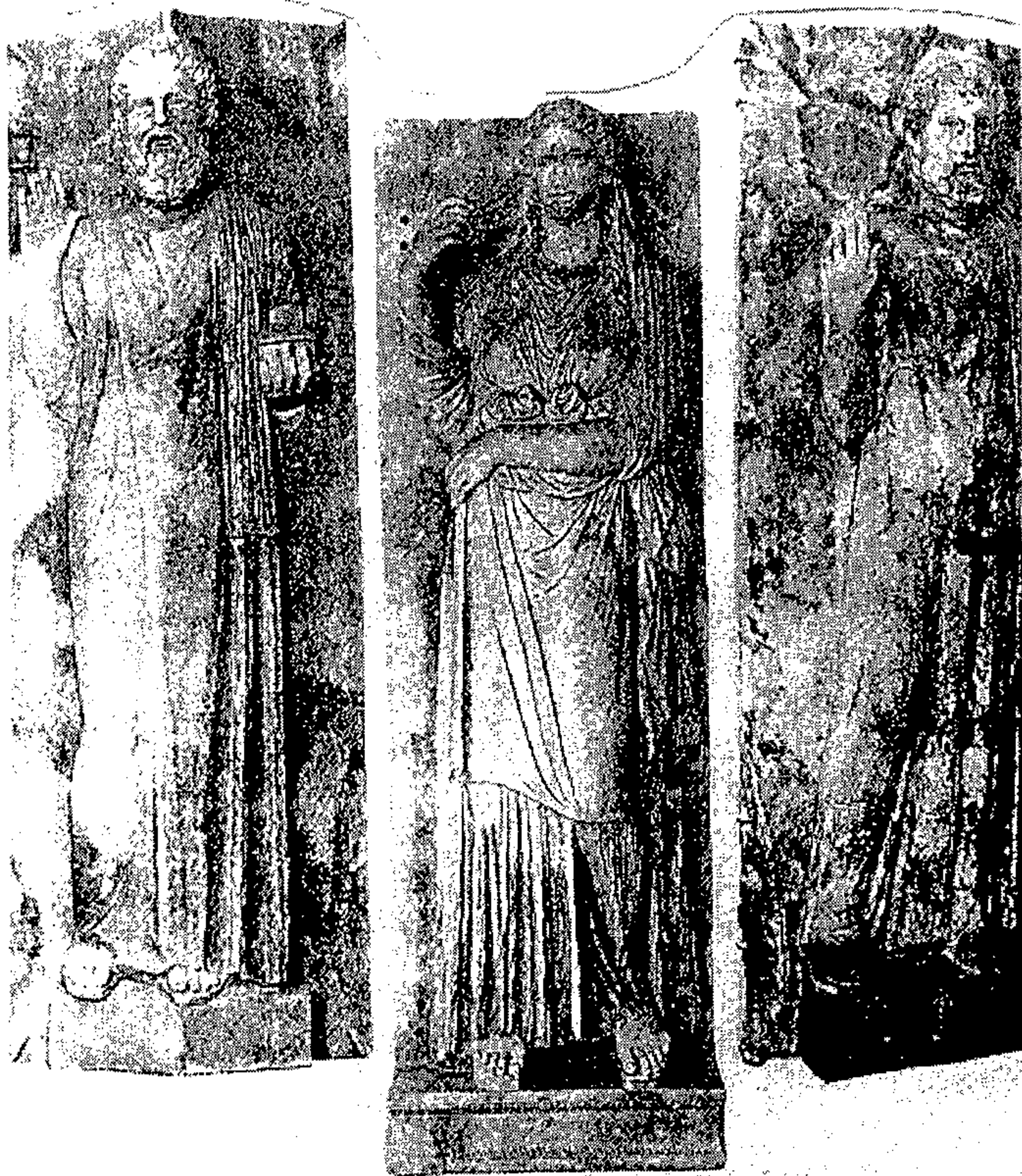


FIGURE 7.4 SARCOPHAGI OF PUNIC PRIESTS AND A CARTHAGINIAN WOMEN, PRE-ROMAN

### **Roman dress, hairstyles and jewellery in Africa up to the 3<sup>rd</sup> century AD**

We know rather more about the religious and social symbolism contained in the evolution of Roman female appearance, from the *toga praetexta* of the young girl to the *stola* and *palla* that constituted the dress of the *matrona*. Even motherhood possibly involved some sort of distinction in dress [Propertius 4.11.61] (Dixon 1988: 73), which is likely in view of the fact that it was a key transition in status for a woman.

Simplicity was an outward sign of innocence with which the young virgin would be adorned. She wore the simple *toga praetexta* and there is no evidence of elaborate hairstyles here. The accompanying bust (from the



funerary masks traditional in Roman culture up to the end of the 3<sup>rd</sup> century AD)<sup>81</sup> shows a young girl with her forehead free and her hair held back by two notched hair bands and drawn behind the ears into a simple roll, called the melon hairstyle (Matheson 2000: 128). The confinement of the hair is however also a sign of the transition from girlhood to womanhood (Sebesta 1998: 110). Levine (1995: 88) explains this restraining of the hair as symbolic of a woman's sexual confinement to one man, her husband.

The ideal of simplicity was not confined to virgins, however. It is for example verbalized in a 3<sup>rd</sup> century inscription from Mactaris [CIL 647] in which Pallia Saturnina is praised by her husband for living a simple life and for neglecting superficial finery of jewellery and dress: *Culto neglecto corporis moribus se ornabat suis et [pi]um [an]im[u]m pudore soio comitabatur suo* ('Neglecting finery she adorned her body with her morality and her modesty was the only companion of her pious soul'). There is no specific indication that this is a Christian epitaph, but Pallia would

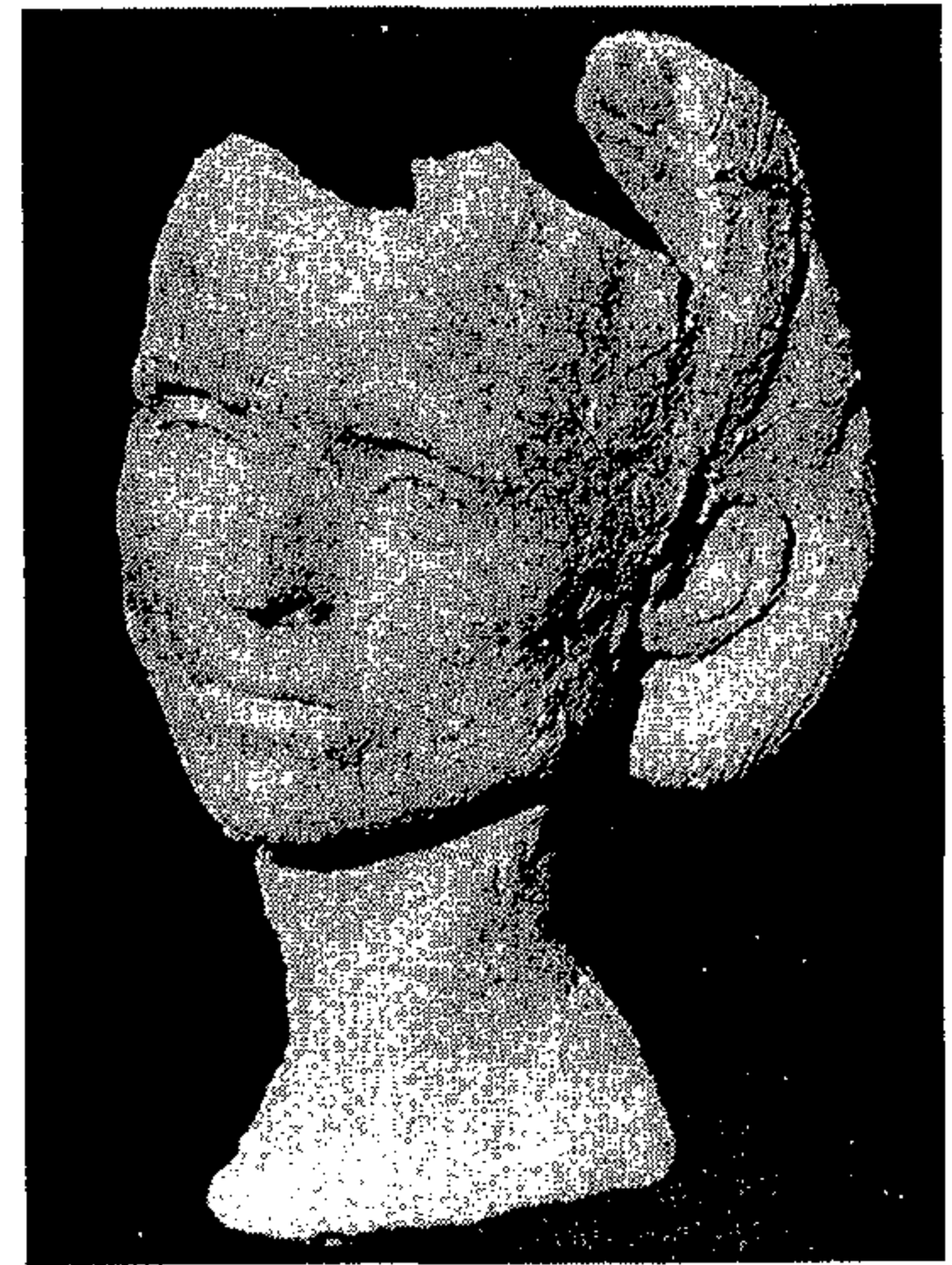


FIGURE 7.5 PLASTER HEAD  
FOUND AT THYSSRUS

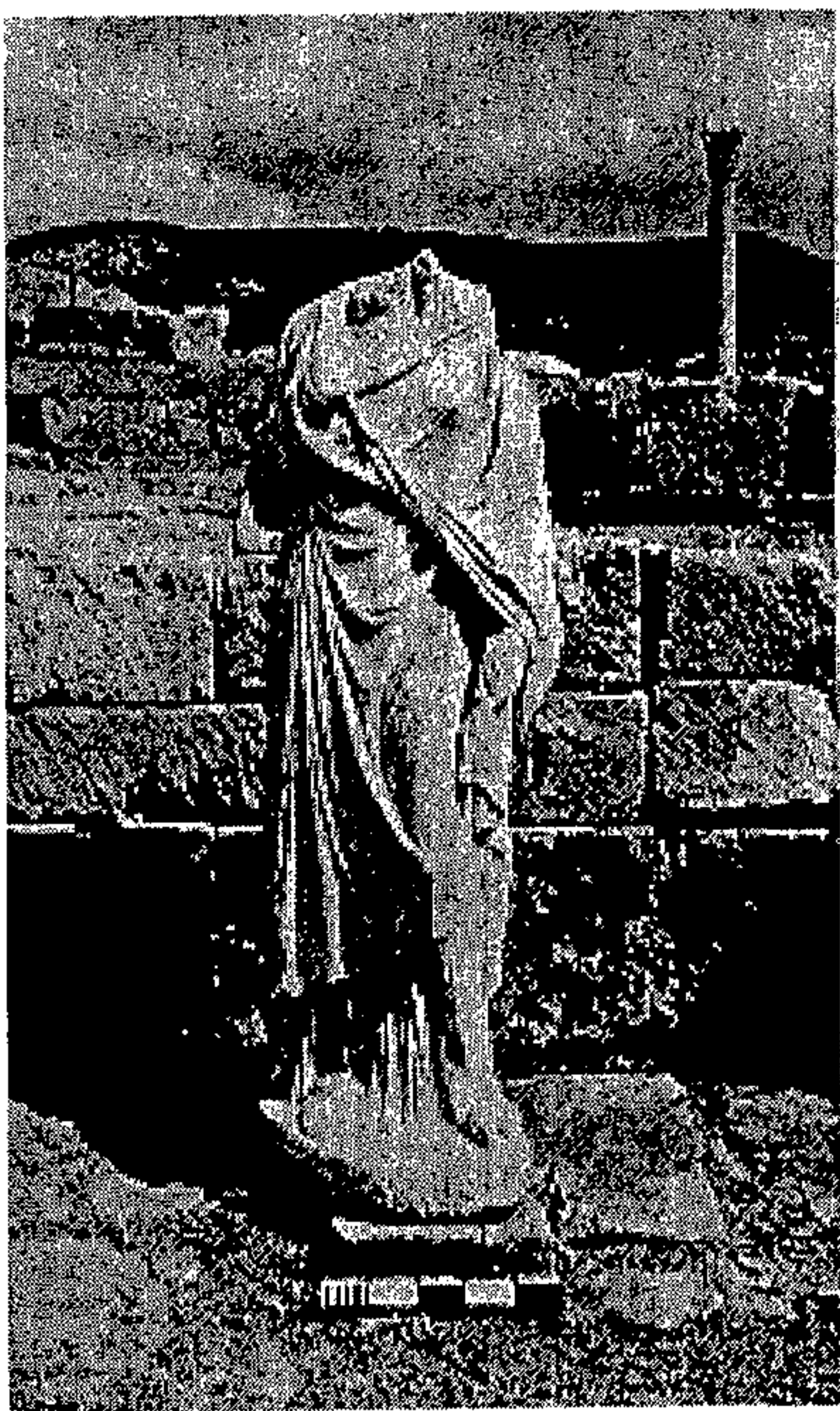


FIGURE 7.6 STATUE OF CLAUDIA EUPOMANE

certainly have earned the approbation of Tertullian - for other women it seems it was harder to abandon the outward trappings of worldly status:

*Tum si quas vel divitiarum suarum vel natalium vel retro dignitatum ratio compellit ita pompaticas progredi, ut sapientiam consecutae, temperare saltem ab huiusmodi curate, ne totis habenis licentiam usurpetis praetextu necessitatis.*

If some of you because of wealth or birth or former dignities are forced to appear in public in overly elaborate dress, as if they had not yet acquired the good sense that is fitting to their age, take heed to temper the evil that is in this thing, lest under pretext of necessity you give rein to unbounded licence.

[*De Cult. Fem.* 2.9.4]

Roman tradition had an ambiguous attitude to adornment: on the one hand, they extolled the Republican simplicity and modesty,<sup>82</sup> on the other there are clear indications of a desire to show off wealth and status, a dichotomy well analysed by Wyke's article on the rhetoric of adornment (1994). Tertullian acidly notes that people only dress up to be seen at the temples and spectacles (*Propter istos enim conventus et mutuum videre ac videri omnes pompae in publicum proferuntur* [*De Cult.*

<sup>81</sup> Further information to be found in *RE*, 'Imagines Majorum'.

<sup>82</sup> When the mother of the Gracchi was asked to show her jewels, she indicated her two sons [Val. Max., 4.4.1]. The Oppian law of 215 BC had curtailed women's right to display their wealth [Livy; 34.1-8], but lasted only 20 years before it was repealed. No further sumptuary legislation occurred, apart from a possible attempt by Elagabalus to regulate dress according to status [*SHA: Elag.* 4.4]. TAIT (1986): *Seven thousand years of jewellery*, 87, notes that Roman jewellery finds are very rare before the 1<sup>st</sup> century AD.





FIGURE 7.7 THE POSE AND DRESS OF THE ROMAN *MATRONA*, EUMACHIA AT POMPEII

*Fem.* 2.11.1]).

To be distinguished from women of lesser status (unmarried girls, non-citizens and disreputable women) the Roman African *matrona* on formal occasions wore the *stola* - a long overgarment covering the tunic down to a woman's ankles, suspended from sewn on straps - and possibly also bound her hair with the *vittae* or broad woollen strips (illustrated in Figure 6.6).<sup>83</sup> The *vittae* in particular were originally held to be an outward indication of chastity. Sometime before the Second Punic War, freedwomen who were married to Roman citizens gained the right to wear the *stola* [Macrob. 1.6.13-14], but its general use had gone out of fashion by the second decade of the 1<sup>st</sup> century AD, and the *vittae* even before that (Fantham *et al* 1994: 232). Nevertheless the status which was symbolized by these items remained desirable to advertise, and sculptures of Roman African *matronae*

are not seen in any other dress until Late Antiquity. It was a sign of respectability commensurate with the honour bestowed upon her by her family or fellow citizens in erecting her statue. The illustration of the statue of Claudia Eupomane (Figure 7.6) from the city of Ptolemais during the Roman period illustrates the formal Roman dress for the *matrona*. Statues such as this were standard and mass-produced - the heads, which were more individualized, were added later. Many similar figures can be seen from Rome.<sup>84</sup> The statue of the Roman matron, whether from Rome, Pompeii or Leptis Magna, represented austere dignity (rather than sexuality) and her role as a Roman wife and mother of virtue are implicit in dress, jewellery and hairstyle. The pose of the figure was also fairly standard, a representation of female modesty, with one hand raising the *palla* to the chest and one leg slightly bent. The veiling of one hand was for reasons of status, not modesty, and probably derived from the Greek notion that it was considered cultivated and even distinguished to leave the hands under one's clothing rather than

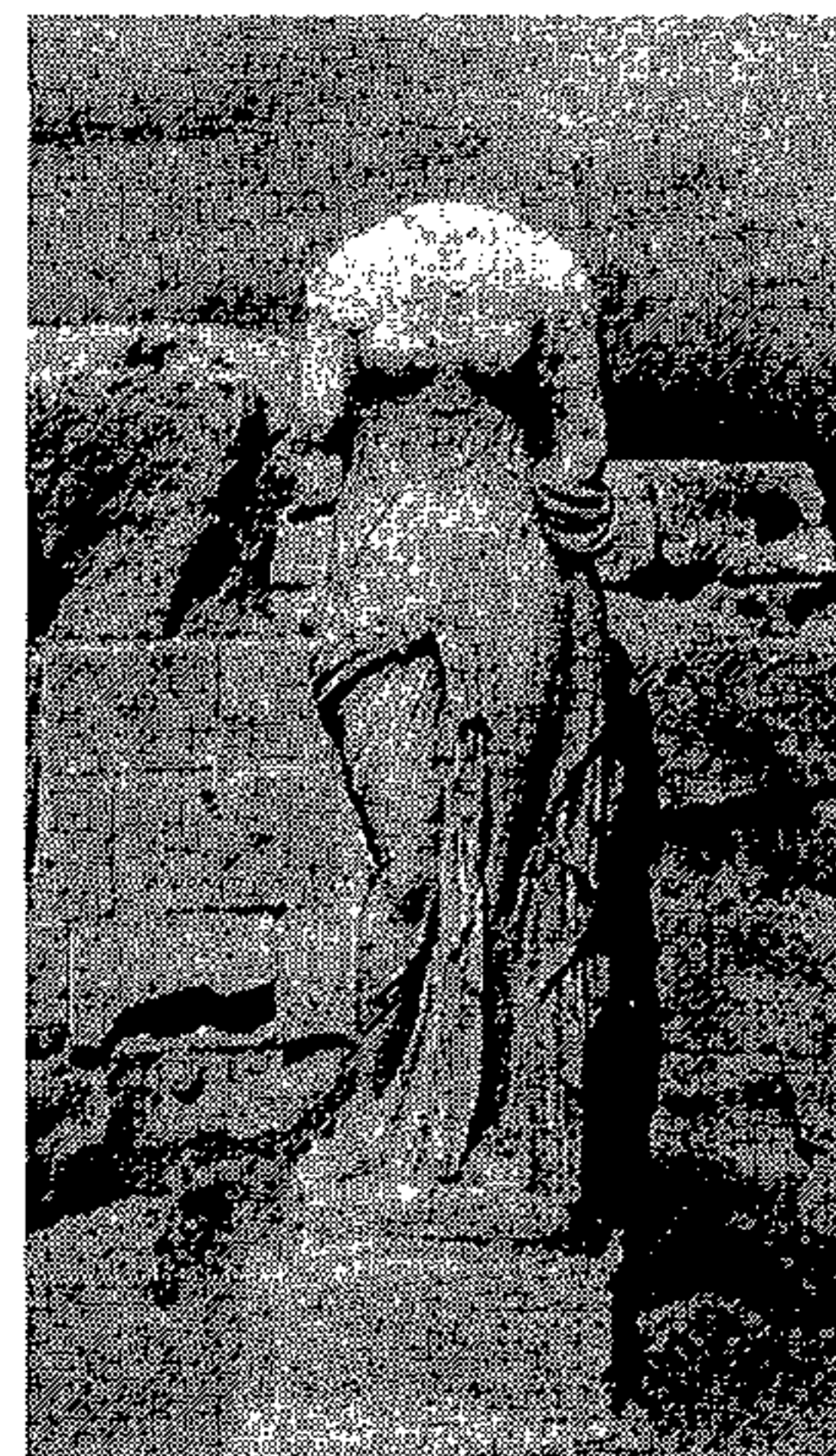


FIGURE 7.8 DRAPED WOMAN FROM SABRATHA



FIGURE 7.9 STATUE OF ELDERLY LADY FROM LEPTIS MAGNA

<sup>83</sup> On the symbolism and use of the *vittae* see the description of the evidence by SENSI (1980/81): 'Ornatus e status sociale delle donne romane'.

<sup>84</sup> Similar poses and dress of Roman women can be seen in KLEINER *ET AL* (2000): 'Her parents gave her the name Claudia'.



waving them about (Brown 1987: 248). At the same time, however, many statues of Roman *matronae* were able to convey with this demure modesty the impression of wealth and a suggestion of sensuality, with parts of the female body often clearly visible beneath the sculptured fabric, as for example in Figure 7.8, a draped female figure of unusual body-type (Wimmer 1963: 38). This is to some extent also the case in Figures 7.6 and 7.7, but definitely not the case in Figure 7.9. Besides her very modest pose, the *matrona* in Figure 7.9 is also veiled by her *palla*. The veil was the symbol of the married woman's fidelity to her husband and her subjection to his authority.<sup>85</sup> At her wedding the Roman woman was veiled for the first time, and unveiled by her husband, as a symbol of her surrender of her virginity to him (Levine 1995: 96).<sup>86</sup> Sebesta (1994: 52 n.31) points out that a number of statues still showed empresses veiling their head with a *palla*, while MacMullen (1980) maintains that under the influence of the Imperial court veiling came to be less common among the élite in the Western empire. The imperial statues of course need not necessarily be taken as realistic representations, since representations of dress are symbolic for modesty and propriety rather than a reflection of current styles. Veiling does, however, become an important issue again under the influence of Christianity, heavily reliant on the writings of the apostle Paul, who felt that women should firstly be seen and not heard [*1 Corinthians* 14.34-35], and if seen should be heavily shrouded [*1 Corinthians* 11.1-6] (discussed below under Late Antiquity).

Like the *stola*, jewellery indicated one's rank and state in Roman society. A description by Manilius from the 1<sup>st</sup> century AD indicates that gold and precious stones were items desired and worn by those wealthy enough to be able to afford them:

*hinc lenocinium formae cultusque repertus  
corporis atque auro quaesita est gratia frontis  
perque caput ducti lapides per colla manusque  
et pedibus niveis fulserunt aurea vincla.*

[From Cassiope<sup>87</sup> come] the enhancement of beauty and devices for adorning the body: from gold has been sought the means to give grace to the appearance; precious stones have been spread over head, neck and hands, and golden chains have shone on snow-white feet... [Astron. 5.516-519]

Illustrations in Tait (1986: 87; 98) showing an elaborate hair ornament from Oea, or jewellery sets from 5<sup>th</sup> century Carthage, reveal that while Christian writers such as Tertullian or Commodian may be exaggerating, a greater inclination to bodily adornment was certainly a reality of the time:

*Video et inter matronas atque prostibulas nullum de habitu discrimen relictum. Circa feminas quidem etiam illa maiorum instituta cediderunt quae modestiae, quae sobrietati patrocinabantur, cum aurum nulla norat praeter unico digito quem sponsus obpignorasset pronubo anulo, cum mulieres usque adeo vino abstinerentur, ut matronam ob resignatos cellae vinariae loculos sui inedia necarint, ... At nunc in feminis prae auro nullum leve est membrum, prae vino nullum liberum est osculum, repudium vero iam et votum est, quasi matrimonii fructus.*

I see, between matrons and harlots, not a vestige of distinction in dress left. Really, as regards women, the usages of our ancestors have lapsed that protected modesty or sobriety, when no woman knew gold save on one finger, which her betrothed pledged to himself with the engagement ring; ... But nowadays among women no limb of body but is heavy with gold; .... divorce by now is prayed for, as if it were the proper sequel of marriage.

[Tert., *Apologet.* 6.4-6]<sup>88</sup>

<sup>85</sup> The divorce initiated by Sulpicius Gallus mentioned on p. 5 indicates that he saw his wife's omission to veil herself as her own withdrawal from the marriage. She had removed herself from the category of married women by exposing herself to other men.

<sup>86</sup> Etymology of the Latin verb *nubere*: in the case of a woman it means both to veil herself, but also to be married (Sebesta 1998: 111).

<sup>87</sup> Cassiope (= Cassiopeia) was the Queen of the Ethiopians and the mother of Andromeda in Greek legend.

<sup>88</sup> Tertullian repeats these thoughts in *De Cultu Feminarum* [2.12.1-2]. It became Roman custom for a married woman to wear a gold ring some time before the 2<sup>nd</sup> century AD [Pliny, *NH* 33.4.12.].



Heavily bejewelled women are not reflected in contemporary Roman African sculpture, but from descriptions we know that fashions were already moving towards the luxury of adornment which characterised the élite of Late Antiquity and Byzantine period in their splendour, the 'earrings hanging down with very heavy weight', the neck 'buried with necklaces' and the wrists 'bound with gems and gold' (*inaures gravissimo pondere pendent...obruitis collum margaritis ... gemmis et auro ligatis*) [Commod., *Instruct.* 60; CSEL 2.18]. Tertullian presents us with the complete opposite of the modestly attired virgin in the matron corrupted by *luxuria* and the many forms of self-indulgence, including a high turnover in husbands. Tertullian's association of luxury with lax morals is a well-known *topos* already present in the writings of Rome's satirists. The same moral is pointed out by Arnobius [*Adv. Nat.* 3.41]

Standard sculpture or body types may have accounted for the similarity in dress and pose of Roman African matrons, but the busts and statues of *matronae* from all periods of the Roman presence in Africa give ample proof that they wanted to follow the hairstyle fashions set in Rome, if not on an everyday basis, then at least on occasions for formal sculpture.

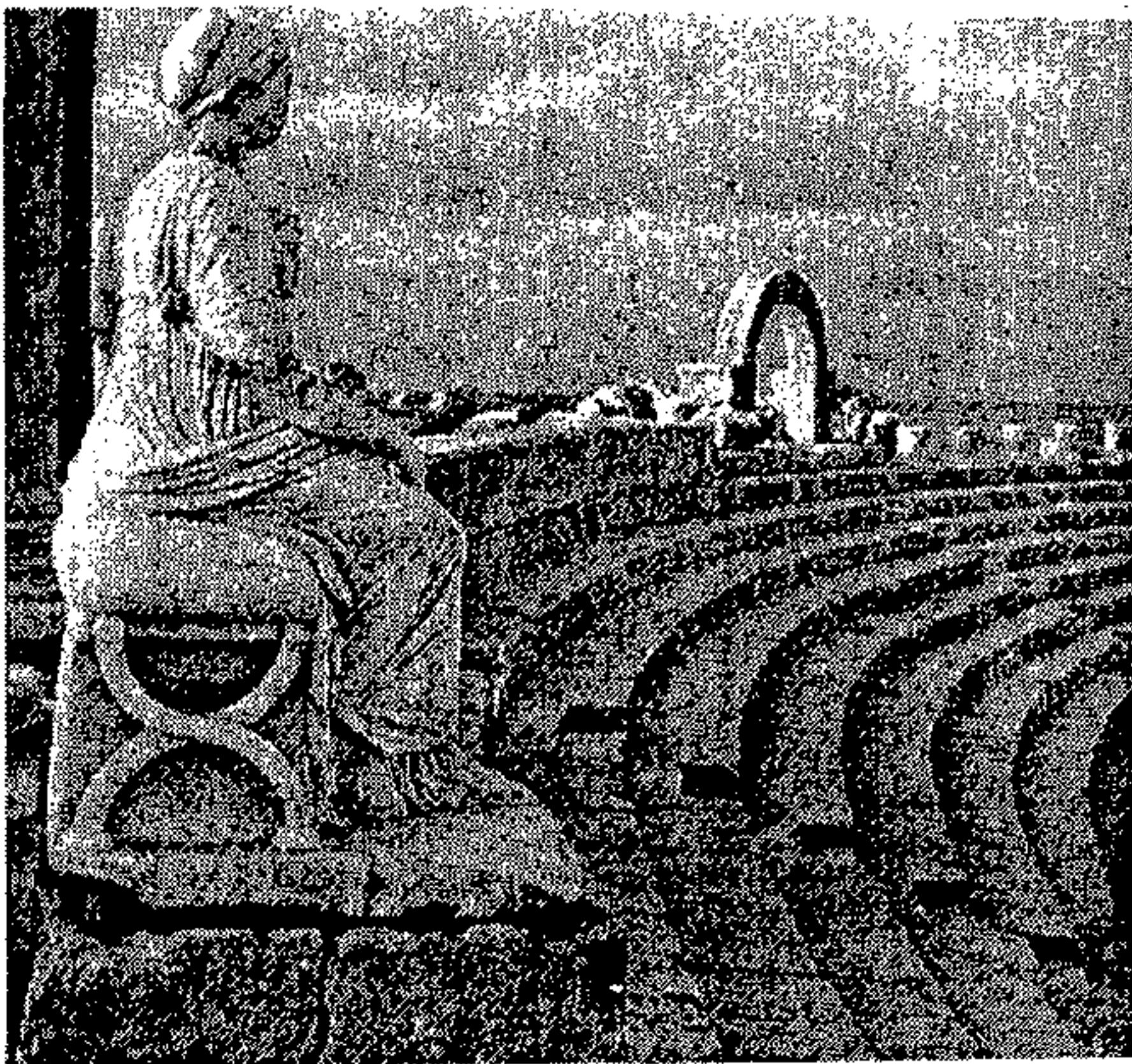


FIGURE 7.10 STATUE OF CRISPINA, THE WIFE OF COMMODUS IN THE THEATRE AT LEPCIS MAGNA

In the *Metamorphoses* [2.8] Lucius says that it is the head and hair which he notes most particularly in a woman, and which is the 'principal part of all the body' (*praecipua pars .. corporis*). Local ladies certainly had the opportunity to observe imperial fashions in statues such as that of the empress Crispina on the left which were erected at markets, fora, theatres and other public venues. The hairstyle offered more than the *stola*, since a bust wearing the hairstyle of the empress indicated not only that the same feminine virtues that the empress embodied could be associated with the subject, but also that she was fashionable. Kleiner and Matheson (2000: 8) comment that 'these hairstyles were not chosen haphazardly. Instead, each corkscrew curl, each flowing

tress, and each blunt cut bang was carefully arranged to make reference to the political or social agenda of the current dynast and his family'. Commodian's Christian disapproval of the woman who was 'adorned at the looking glass with thy curled hair turned back from thy brow' (*ornas et ad spectum cincinnos fronte reflexos*) [*Instruct.* 59; CSEL 2.19] no doubt reflects a very real image of the time spent on hair alone. Also non-élite women were eager to be associated with these virtues in the process of upward mobility. The *tutulus* hairstyle, for example, marked a woman out as a *materfamilias*, with locks of hair twisted and fastened around the top of the head to form a high chignon with fillets (Sensi 1980/81: 73 n.4).<sup>89</sup> During the early Empire the simple coiffures of Livia reigned supreme.<sup>90</sup> This and the hairstyle seen in Figures 7.11 and 7.12 is known as the

<sup>89</sup> The *tutulus* was also worn by priestesses of Ceres and the Imperial cult. It also features in Figure 9.4, although this is in fact not a woman of the local élite but an organ player at the games!

<sup>90</sup> Possibly Livia wanted to support her husband's new moral order in public and private life by this outward sign of simplicity. See SEBESTA (1998): 'Women's costume and feminine civic morality in Augustan Rome', 105 *passim*, on Augustus' emphasis on dress as an outward sign of morality.



‘Zopfityp’ (Winkes 2000: 35). By wearing such a hairstyle the image of the Roman *matrona* assumed all the attributes of the ideal Roman woman.

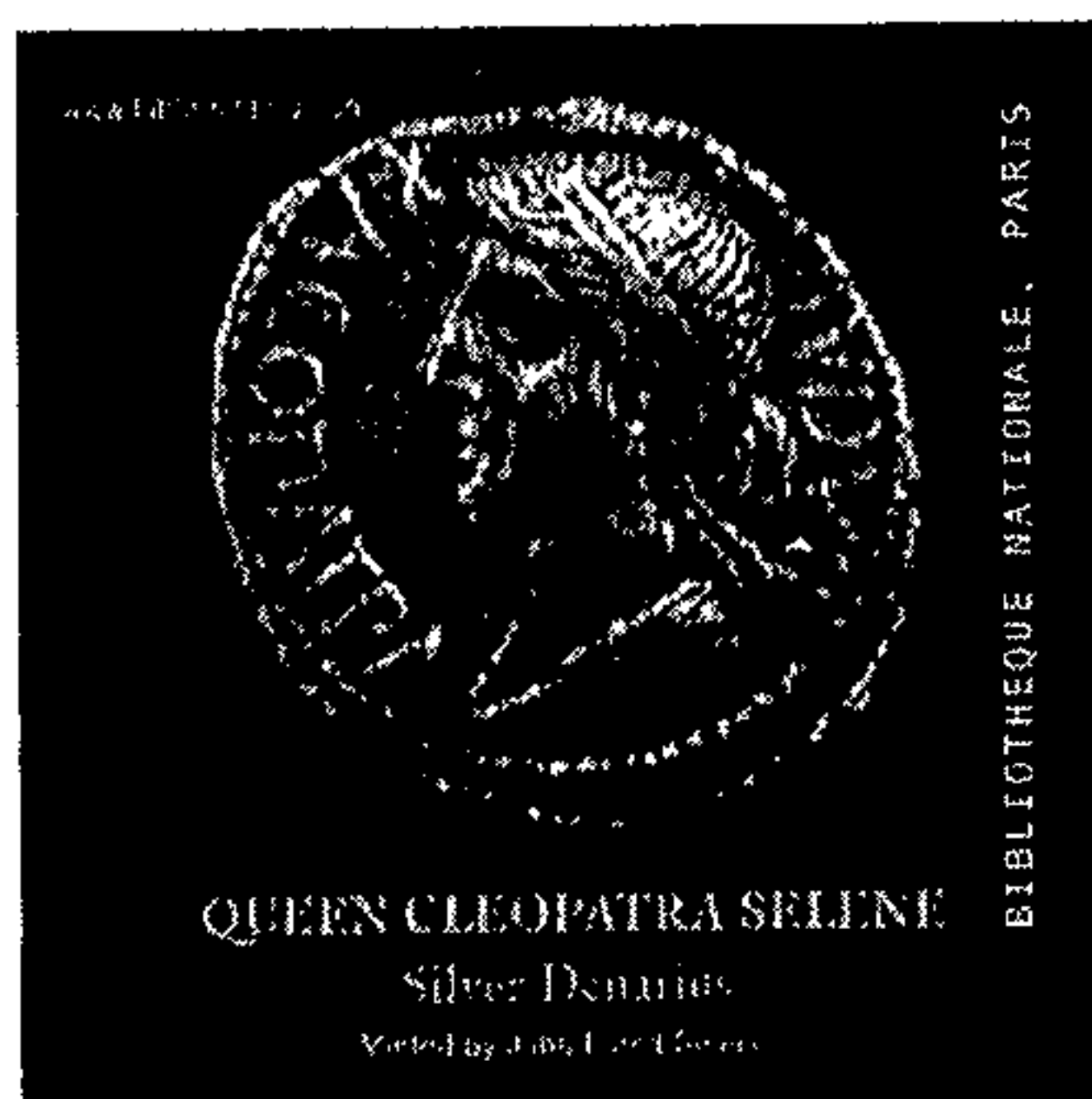


FIGURE 7.11 CLEOPATRA SELENE IN PROFILE ON A SILVER DENARIUS MINTED BY JUBA II AND SELENE

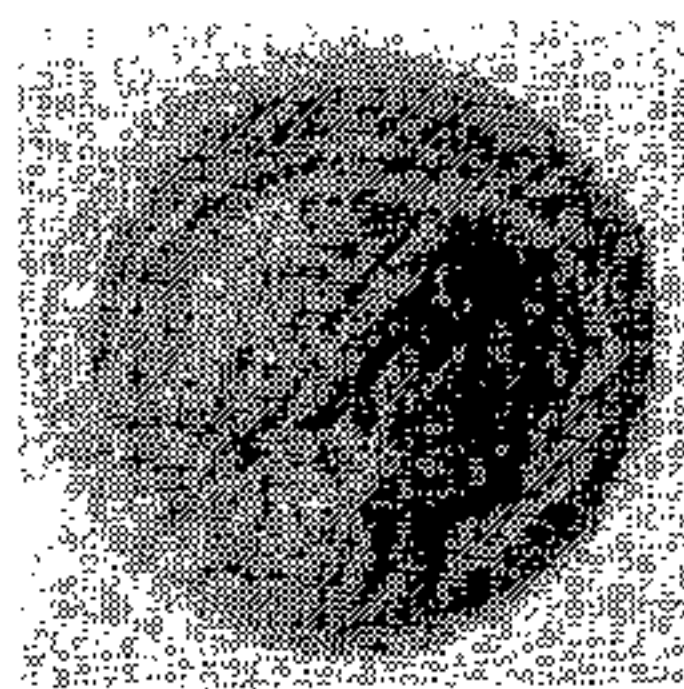


FIGURE 7.12 OBVERSE OF A BRONZE COIN ISSUED BY CLEOPATRA VII

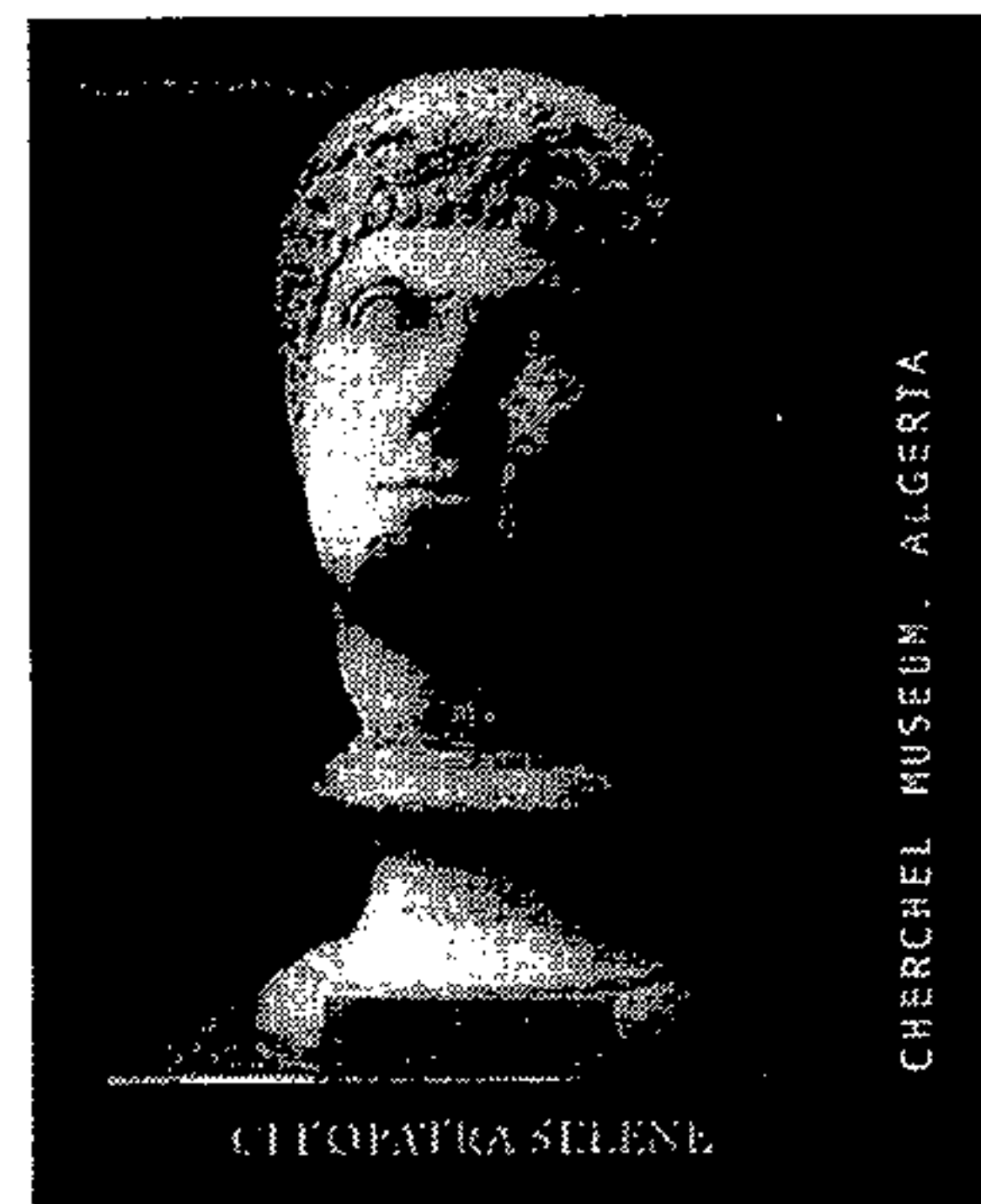


FIGURE 7.13 BUST OF CLEOPATRA SELENE

At Iol Caesarea it may appear at first glance that the wife of Juba II, Cleopatra Selene, ascribed to the imperial style of the period dictated by Livia (Figure 1.11). Coins issued by her mother, Cleopatra VII, show the same hairstyle, however (Figure 7.12). This style differs in its simplicity from that of any of the other coin portraits of Hellenistic queens reproduced in Macurdy (1932: figure 11), which tend to be far more ornate.<sup>91</sup> The bust of the Queen of Numidia shows a more elaborate hairstyle, as can be seen in Figure 7.13, and it is likely that certain styles were adopted for certain occasions (like coinage) while not necessarily being the style commonly worn by that individual.

The following illustrations show a portrait from Rome of Antonia the Younger on the left, and a portrait head of another young woman from Lepcis Magna on the right, both dating from the reign of Tiberius. The simple



FIGURE 7.13 ROME, 1<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY AD



FIGURE 7.14 AFRICA, 1<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY AD

<sup>91</sup> The coin portraits of the other Hellenistic queens show ornate curls, diadems and elaborate veils in the Hellenistic manner.



but fashionable hairstyle of the early Empire confirms the fact that these were women of prosperous status, already indicated by the act of commissioning a bust. Women of very low economic status were not portrayed with dressed hair, and their apparel in tombstone reliefs is usually confined to a simple tunic.<sup>92</sup> Occasionally, however, women who were of low social status but of some means are portrayed with fashionable hairstyles. Figure 9.4, an organ player at the circus games, is a good example of this. The intricacy of some of the later styles and the amount of hair needed to create them has led some scholars such as Winkes (2000) to speculate



FIGURE 7.16 HEAD OF A WOMAN, TRAJANIC PERIOD. FROM THE BASILICA AT LEPCIS MAGNA

that many styles may have been wigs or accommodated with false hair pieces. There is in fact little doubt about this, as Tertullian actually confirms this suspicion:

*Affigitis praeterea nescio quas enormitates sutilium atque textilium capillamentorum, nunc in galeri modum quasi vaginam capitis et operculum verticis, nunc in cervicum retro suggestum ... Deus vos velari iubet, credo ne quarumdam capita videantur.*

Some of you affix to your heads I know not what monstrosities of sewn and woven wigs, now in the form of a cap as if it were a casing for the head and a covering for the crown, now in the form of a chignon at the back of the neck .... God commands women to be veiled. I imagine He does so lest the heads of some of them should be seen!

[*De Cult. Fem.* 2.7.1-2]

The regular waves in the hairstyle of this immaculate matron from Lepcis Magna from the reign of Trajan (Figure 7.16) is a forerunner of the style



FIGURE 7.17 PAINTED ROUNDEL FROM EGYPT: JULIA DOMNA, SEPTIMIUS SEVERUS AND CARACALLA



FIGURE 7.18 JULIA DOMNA FROM THE SEVERAN ARCH IN LEPCIS MAGNA

introduced by Julia Domna towards the end of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century. The latter can be seen on a painted Egyptian roundel (Figure 7.17)<sup>93</sup> and also in Figure 7.18. One is also reminded here of the 'tightly waved hair' of the Punic woman described by Charles-Picard (1964:173).<sup>94</sup> Julia Domna's hair is arranged in regular, ordered waves and caught loosely at the back of the neck. An imitation of the hairstyle can be seen in several terracottas from Thysdrus (late 2<sup>nd</sup> or early 3<sup>rd</sup> century AD), depicting the 'Toilette of Aphrodite/Venus' (Deneauve 1964-65: 126), shown overleaf as Figures 7.19-7.21. Two of the figures (Figures 7.20 and 7.21) have two locks hanging loose in front, and also wear an upstanding diadem, a variation on the traditional style of the

<sup>92</sup> The representation of women's social status in iconography is discussed by KAMPEN (1982): 'Social status and gender in Roman art', 63-77. See also BENARIO (1958): 'Julia Domna - Mater Senatus et Patriae' on the status and representation of Julia Domna.

<sup>93</sup> In this picture the face of Geta, who was murdered by his brother, has been removed.

<sup>94</sup> See above p. 141.





FIGURE 7.19  
TERRACOTTA VENUS

empress.

Deneauve suggests that it is also possible that the artists may have been inspired by contemporary sculpture, for example the Severan arch, rather than that women were actually wearing this hairstyle.<sup>95</sup> This is plausible in light of the fact that the artists were probably, like the Empress, eastern (Walter 1979: 271). Mahjoubi *et al* (1981: 499) claim that the artistic trend from the east which was so influential during the Severan period was 'all the more readily assimilated because it was in keeping with ancient, but still vigorous tendencies in African art.' It seems more likely though, that these figurines celebrating the cult of beauty would be reflections of real adornment, as in the case of the portrait heads on the Venus body type mentioned above.<sup>96</sup> Like the young matron illustrated in Figure 1, some women very likely did adopt this hairstyle or versions of it.

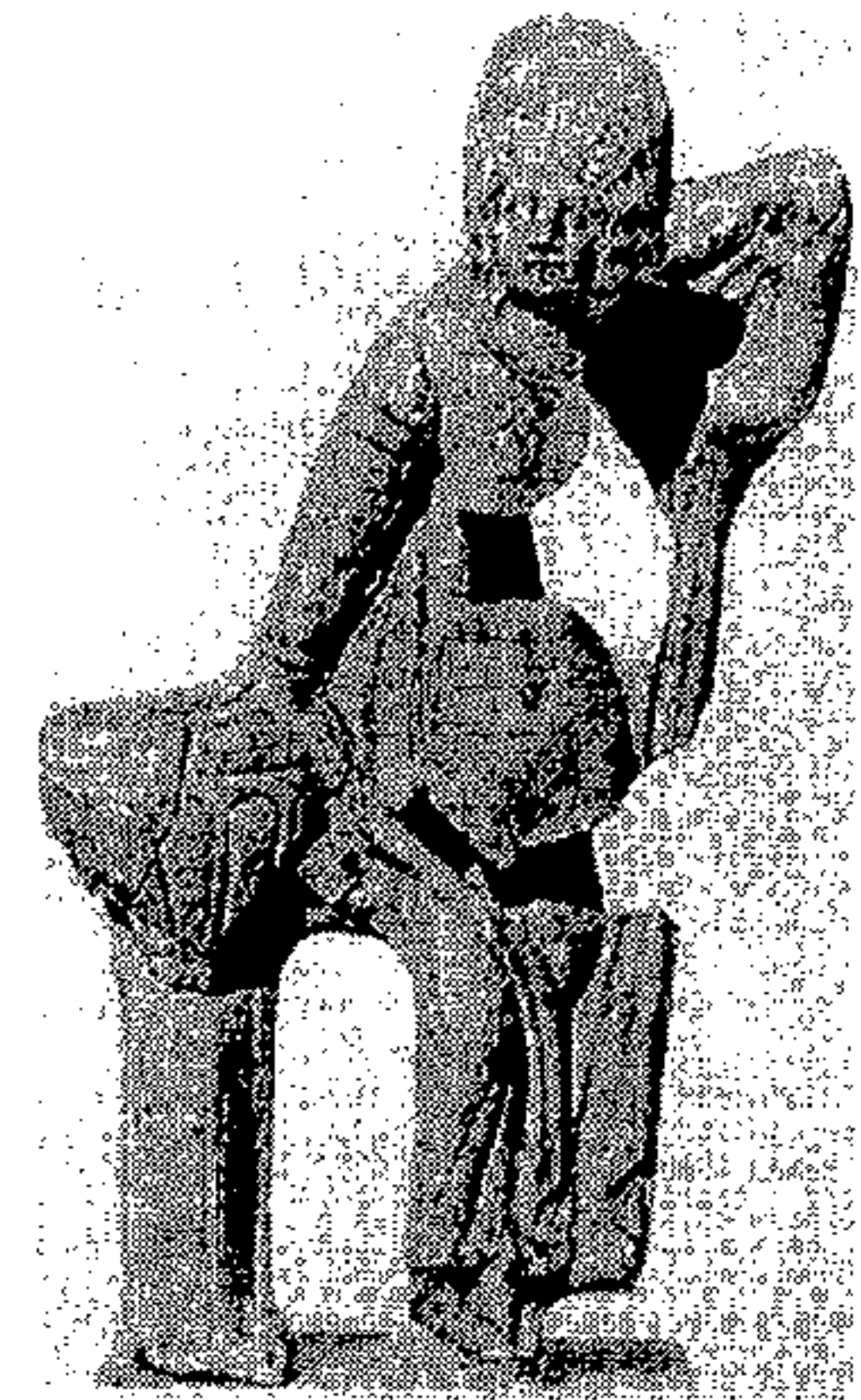


FIGURE 7.20 HAIRSTYLES  
MODELLED ON THAT OF  
JULIA DOMNA

In the *Metamorphoses* [2.9] the character Lucius expresses his admiration for blonde hair at some length, and throughout the history of antiquity it would appear that he was but one of many. In the African context naturally blonde hair may even have been evident before the arrival of the Romans. The poet Callimachus (a native of Cyrene) [*Hymn. Apoll.* 85] and Lucan [*Phars.* 10.126 *passim*] both mention blonde Libyan women. Procopius [*De Bell. Vand.* 4.13] seven centuries later also comments on blond natives in the west of Africa, but by this time it could also be the result of the Vandal presence.<sup>97</sup> The perennial popularity of blonde hair was also evident in Rome, where women used the fair hair cut from the heads of Germanic slave girls for wigs [Ovid, *Ars Amat.* 1.14; Martial 6.12],<sup>98</sup> and Galen also comments on the practice of bleaching and dying hair at Rome [12.308.434]. The claims of Tertullian, Commodian [*Instruct.* 59] and others that some Roman African women dyed their hair are therefore entirely plausible:



FIGURE 7.21 HEAD OF  
VENUS, TERRACOTTA

*Video quasdam et capillum croco vertere. Pudet eas etiam nationis suae quod non Germaniae atque Galliae sint*

<sup>95</sup> See also S. MOLLARD-BESQUES (1947): 'Scène de coiffure - Groupe en terre cuite', *Bulletin des Musées de France*, 9. Statues found in Tunisia with similar hairstyles are discussed by P. GAUCKLER (1896): *BAC* 147 and plate XII, and L. POINSSOT AND R. LANTIER (1923): *BAC* 49 and plates II and III (references given by Deneauve (1964-65: 126-7). DUNBABIN (1989): 'Baiaurum grata voluptas', 23 *passim*, gives a large number of examples of the Toilet of Marine Venus from the baths in North Africa as being particularly appropriate for the baths in their association with the cult of beauty.

<sup>96</sup> See the discussion above, p. 138.

<sup>97</sup> BESCHAOUCH (1966): 'La mosaïque de chasse à l'imphithéâtre découverte à Smirat en Tunisie', 134-157 and also KAHLO (1961): 'Die blonde Libyer', 312-316.

<sup>98</sup> Among the Germanic peoples red hair was a sign of valour for men, who apparently also dyed their hair this colour. Germanic women, on the other hand, are not known to have done so (Todd 1972: 82).



*procreatae. Ita patriam capillo transferunt... Male ac pessime sibi auspicantur flammeo capite et decorum putant quod inquinant.*

I see some women dye their hair blonde by using saffron. They are ashamed even of their country, sorry that they were not born in Germany or in Gaul... It is hardly a good omen for them that they wish their hair to be flame-coloured and mistake for beauty something which merely stains them. [De Cult. Fem. 2.6].



FIGURE 7.22 FUNERAL MOSAIC OF VICTORIA AND SCRIBE

Victoria in the accompanying Christian mosaic is depicted as blonde, and a clear distinction is made between her and her darker husband with his stylus and writing desk. Alexander (1987: 10) maintains that the illustrated woman is not a portrait, but based on a 'particular workshop cartoon', which negates any individualization, and indeed the darker man/lighter woman combination is a traditional representation, as seen for example in the Pompeian fresco of the baker and his wife, or indicated above in Figure 7.17 between Septimius Severus and Julia Domna. In ancient thought the ideal woman remained indoors and was therefore pale, while the man pursued the outdoor activities of the field and forum. Depictions of pale women with darker men sought to emphasize the status of the woman, who by her pallor had no need to work out of doors.<sup>99</sup> Whitening the face (for example with white lead) was a well known female custom in Roman antiquity. Apuleius presents us with a lurid version of the daughter of Rufinus, 'her dyed lips, her rouged cheeks, her lascivious eyes' (*medicatum os et purpurissatas genas et inlices oculos*) [Apol. 76.5].<sup>100</sup> Tertullian like all the Christian writers<sup>101</sup> strongly condemns any artificial enhancement that women indulged in, from the dying of their hair to the painting their faces - which is scarcely surprising since it was seen as a way of luring men, as Ovid's remarks already indicate.<sup>102</sup> Their words do not seem to have had much effect - in 6<sup>th</sup> century Byzantium women were still dying their hair blonde (Charanis 1973b: 69).

### Ornamentation and dress from the 4<sup>th</sup> century to the Byzantine period

From the 4<sup>th</sup> to the 7<sup>th</sup> century attitudes to the body and its adornment fell into two broad categories - the body was disdained by the ascetics - of whom there were not a great number in Roman Africa, compared to Egypt and the East - and bodily adornment was exploited by the wealthy political élite, who indulged in luxurious ostentation of every kind. Sculpture in Late Antiquity became very stylized, which can be seen in Figure 7.23 below. The tunics are shown with formalized folds and the hair and facial

<sup>99</sup> On the practice of whitening the face see Galen, *De Compositione Medicamentorum Secundum Locos* 1, in *Opera Omnia* 12.434-435.

<sup>100</sup> HUNINK (1997): *Apuleius of Madauros: Pro se de magia*, 195-196, refers to the juxtaposition of this description of a 'painted trollop' and the context, her wedding ceremony.

<sup>101</sup> Tertullian, *De Cult. Fem.* 2.7; Cyprian, *De Hab. Virg* 14; Augustine *De Doct. Chr.* 4.21.49 and *De Bono Vid.* 19.24: 'this is immoral deceit' (*adulterina fallacia est*) says Augustine, adding that lying paint was no adornment, whereas good character was [Ep. 245.1].

<sup>102</sup> Clearly this condemnation of female adornment was therefore not peculiar to Christianity, as the example by Apuleius shows. It was also a *topos* among satirists (for example Juvenal [Sat. 6.461-485]) and other misogynistic writings. Under Christianity, however, it was also interpreted as a criticism of God's work [Tert., *De Cult. Fem.* 2.5.3]. BALDWIN (1975-76): 'The women of Greece and Rome', 144, points out that it is somewhat unfair to blame Christian teaching for many of the restrictions placed on women - 'the misogynistic side of some Christian teaching will have been congenial to Greek and Roman prejudices'.



features of both the woman and the man are highly stylized.

The original draped garments of Rome had by Late Antiquity been eclipsed by fitted garments - long sleeves and pants - which were now the standard of the ruling élite. Foreign elements of dress may already have been introduced to the traditional Roman costume under the Severi, especially Elagabalus [Herodian 5.2], but both Eutropius [16.5] and Ammianus Marcellinus [15.5] imply that it was under Diocletian that the Roman world really began to adopt items or characteristics of barbarian dress. At the beginning of the 5<sup>th</sup> century the emperor Honorius still legislated against the wearing of barbarian pants and leather garments but it was already too late to stem the tide. By the 6<sup>th</sup> century the description of the apparel of the Patricians included a mantle, white leggings, black sandals and leather thongs [Joh. Lydus, *De Magistr.* 1.16.3]. Where previously deportment and the evidence of education in speech and knowledge had indicated one's place in the social hierarchy, and dress among the privileged élite had consisted of the discreetly differentiated but otherwise uniform *toga* or *stola*, from Late Antiquity rank was



FIGURE 7.23 LATE ANTIQUITY.  
HUSBAND AND WIFE FROM THAMUGADI

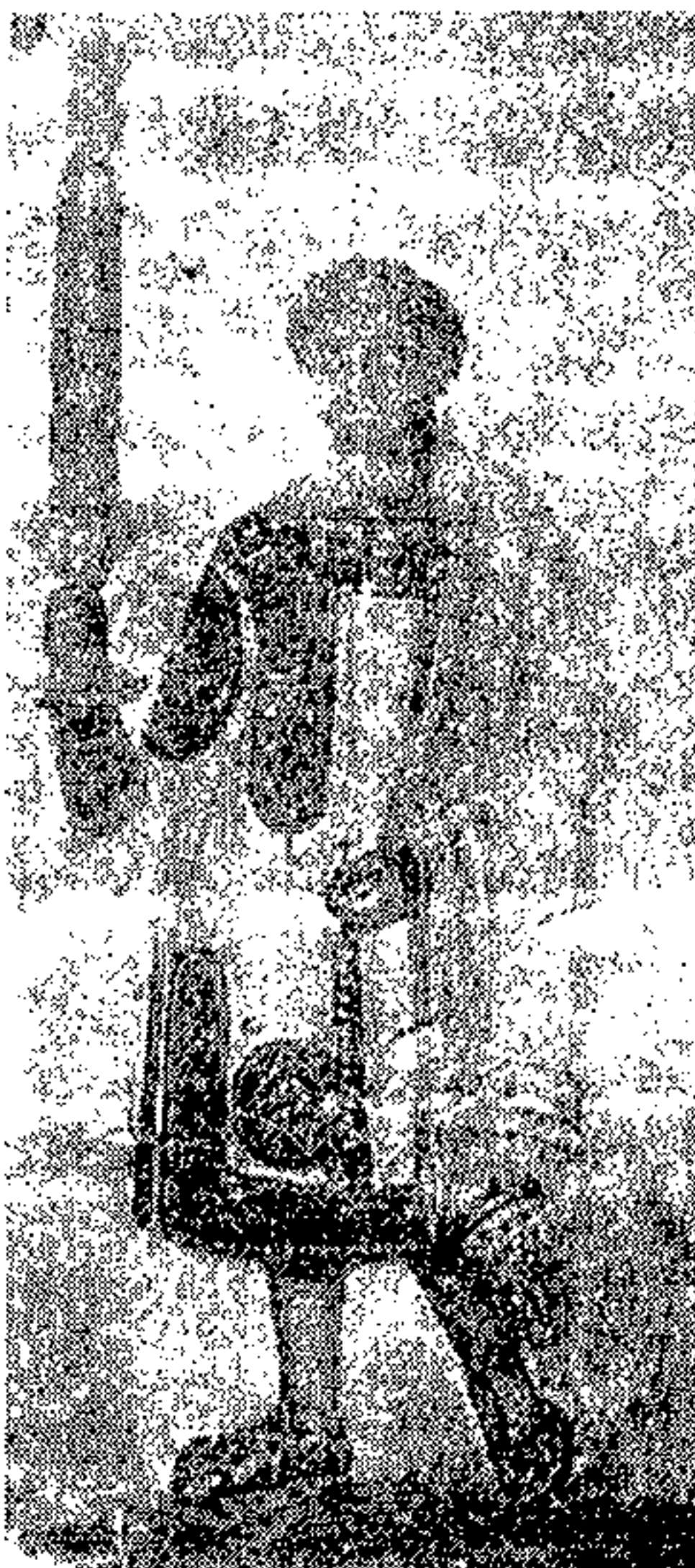


FIGURE 7.24 CANDLE HOLDER  
FROM THE 4<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY TOMB  
OF AELIA ARISUTHI

indicated more by ostentatious wealth, the body swathed in heavy clothes and ornaments [Aug., *Serm.* 51.4.5; *Enarr. in Ps.* 25.2.12f]. It was a symbolic opposition to the thin and simple clothing of the poor who were socially less protected. Brown (1987: 273) even goes so far as to equate the dress of Late Antiquity with heraldry, 'designed to show hierarchical divisions within the upper classes'. Brown is referring specifically to the elaborately embroidered or appliquéd clothing and heavy jewellery which developed under the influence of the Greek East (Fabre 1971/2: 109-110) and anticipated Byzantine splendour.<sup>103</sup> The ornate type of decoration illustrated on the *dalmatica* of the figure on the left from the 4<sup>th</sup> century tomb at Gargàresch already bears a similarity to the mosaic panels at San Vitale, Ravenna, depicting Justinian and Theodora and their entourages.<sup>104</sup> It also shows some local characteristics similar to those exhibited in the wall paintings from 3<sup>rd</sup> century Faw in the Roman/ Byzantine East (illustrated in Bowersock 1990: plates 12-14). The prominent eyes and general themes of decoration depicting a prominent local citizen (with unmistakable Arab features and named 'Zaki') there is in the same adapted Graeco-Roman tradition as that illustrated in the Gargàresch tomb.

Greater modesty arose with Christianity, a time when clothing covered more of

<sup>103</sup> FABRE (1971/2): 'Recherches sur l'origine des ornements vestimentaires du Bas-Empire', attempts to argue for the Africo-Egyptian origin of the *orbiculus* (a round decoration on the shoulders or at the base of the tunic) and the *tablion*, but concludes on the basis of archaeological evidence that these items are more likely to have a Syrian origin. The *paragauda* or patterned border on the dress of the figure in the Mosaic of the Seasons (see Figure 12.11) is also of Syrian origin, hence Apuleius' description of this type of decoration in reference to the dress of the worshippers of the Syrian goddess [*Metam.* 8.27].

<sup>104</sup> But see also the similarity pointed out by BANDINELLI (1971): *Rome: the Late Empire*, 95, to other servant figures relating to posture and garments. The fresco of a cup bearer from a house on the Caelian hill in Rome is very similar to that of Figure 7.24.





FIGURE 7.25 AELIA ADORNED

wives draped in the massive jewellery of Late Antiquity (Stout 1994: 80). The Julius mosaic (Figure 11.3) associating the key female figure, presumably the mistress of the estate, with jewellery, and the ornately bound, almost medieval hairstyle of the woman in Figure 7.32 are also clearly conscious attempts to advertise wealth and status. Even in the case of the martyrs Perpetua and Felicitas (illustrated in Figure 13.2) there is a clear distinction in the mind of the artist between the bejewelled woman of élite status and the slave girl, who is depicted unadorned in any way. Augustine regarded some jewellery items as amulets and therefore as inherently pagan. For this reason he condemned the wearing of earrings by men, but does not mention women [*Ep.* 245.2]. Cyprian [*De Hab. Virg.* 14] is equally critical of the wearing of earrings by women, but here it is simply because of the general devotion to simplicity advocated by all Christian writers, and it seems that women's earrings did not have any religious significance.

An indication of the status of Aelia Arisuth illustrated in Figure 7.25 is her jewellery, even though this may be considered quite modest by the standards of the period. She wears the type of collar-

the body and revealed less of its contours than it had before. By the beginning of the 3<sup>rd</sup> century women of the élite wore a white or whitish *tunica intima*, ample but with narrow sleeves, rather like that worn by men. Over this they wore the *palla* or cloak which also could also cover the head like a veil. Instead of this, or sometimes together with the *palla* they also wore the *dalmatica*, a red or yellow coloured robe with wide sleeves illustrated in Figure 7.22 above, which was sometimes decorated.<sup>105</sup> The *palla* worn by Aelia Arisuth from Gargàresch is also the same as that worn by the orant figure of Victoria Elias from Thabraca (Figure 7.22) and also bears some resemblance to the one worn by Punic women as illustrated in Figure 7.3. Jewellery in the period of Late Antiquity and up to the Byzantine period remained an indication of status, in spite of the fact that luxury is still roundly criticized by the Christian writers, especially for women. On tombstones it was clearly something that was advertised with pride and Christian sarcophagi from all over the Empire show husbands and



FIGURE 7.26 MONICA:  
MOSAIC FROM CARTHAGE

<sup>105</sup> According to SCHEITHAUER (1987): *Kaiserbild und literarisches Programm*, 61, the dalmatian tunic achieved respectability from the second half of the 4<sup>th</sup> century, when it was taken over by the Christian clergy as their normal form of dress. On the *dalmatica* see also KOLB (1976): 'Kleidungstücke in der Historia Augusta: Textkonjekturen und -emendationen zu AS 33, 4. 41, 4. A 45, 5, mit einem Excurs über die dalmatica'.



necklace which Libyan women had worn before the advent of the Romans, but which was by now also a fashionable Roman jewellery item, replacing the simple chain and pendant or jewelled necklace of the first centuries AD that are known from mummy portraits. Stout (1994: 78) mentions that the neck rings incorporated medallions in the mummy portraits of the 4<sup>th</sup> century AD and later. This is not the case in the portrait above, nor is this of solid gold, like contemporary examples that have been found in the area of Slovakia/Czech Republic, Hungary and Romania (Stout 1994: 79).

The illustration of Monica (Figure 7.26) is doubtless a later allegorical interpretation rather than a realistic portrait. Under Byzantine influence heavy jewellery conveyed dignity and status, but it is debatable whether the real Monica, the wife of a municipal officer of a small town was quite so lavishly endowed.<sup>106</sup> The image is less a portrait of motherhood and nurturing than one which reflects the status given to her by her son, rather like similarly styled images of Mary in Byzantine art.<sup>107</sup>

An item of jewellery for adorning the hair (dated to the 3<sup>rd</sup> century AD) was found at Tunis. In the centre are three stone settings set in circles of pearls, with three hanging pendants ending in two outer pearls and a centre sapphire (Stout 1994: 80), reflecting the fashion of Late Antiquity for more massive jewellery. A parallel can be seen in the hanging pendants which are a feature in the crown of Theodora in the famous mosaic of San Vitale, Ravenna.

Veiling or covering the head would certainly have limited the effect of such hair decorations and even earrings, which was perhaps in part the intention.<sup>108</sup> As mentioned briefly above, the veil, which already represented the pagan Roman ideals of chastity and modesty, received even greater symbolism under Christianity,<sup>109</sup> as the number of treatises written by African authors on the subject indicates [Tert., *De Cult. Fem.*; *De Virg. Vel.*; Cyprian, *De Hab. Virg.*]. Chastity and modesty under Christianity were even more idealized because in addition to their Roman values they now also stood for the discipline of the body and self-denial: 'Although the veil was a symbol of subjection, it was also a badge of honour, of sexual reserve and hence the mastery of the self' (Rousselle 1992: 315). Where previously the veil had been reserved for women of high status and had passed to the upwardly mobile, now Christian women of all levels of society took to wearing the veil, and even dressed as matrons. In the mosaic of the orant figure Victoria Elias, for example, the veil as well as the hand gesture distinguishes her as a religious woman.

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<sup>106</sup> In her discussion of Christian women in Rome, HICKEY (1987): *Women of the Roman aristocracy as Christian monastics*, 23-26, concludes that Jerome disguised the humbler origins of some of his female converts such as Paula or Paulina, possibly for the purpose of throwing their asceticism into sharp relief. An aristocratic lineage somehow also added lustre to a public figure.

<sup>107</sup> To my knowledge there are no images of Mary in Roman Africa during the period under discussion. But no strong Eastern influence is discernible during the Byzantine period in Africa, and no evidence of the cult of icons which was gaining popularity in the Eastern part of the Empire. CAMERON (1991): *Christianity and the rhetoric of Empire*, 202 n.53, also points to the similarity between the Western relic-free cult of the Virgin and the cult of the saints, which was centred on shrines rather than icons. The cult of the Virgin Mary is absent in African church decoration, at least as far as one can tell from the remains (Cameron 1982: 51-52). The only evidence of special devotion to the Virgin Mary is to be found in the Carthage seals, and these were the property of Byzantine officials (Cameron 1982: 52). Also relevant here is the study by HERRIN (1982): 'Women and the faith in icons in early Christianity', although there is no reference to Africa specifically.

<sup>108</sup> On the motives of Tertullian in this regard, see RADITSA (1985): 'The appearance of women and contact. Tertullian's *de habitu feminarum*'.

<sup>109</sup> Paul instructs women to veil themselves [*I Corinthians* 11.1-6].



The works of Tertullian and Cyprian on veiling essentially deal with the words of the apostle Paul who recommends that a woman should cover her head to show that she is under the authority of her husband [1 *Corinthians* 11.5-16]. Before Christianity Roman virgins as opposed to matrons had gone about bare headed, but Christian writers advocated veiling so that they should be known to God alone and not be a temptation to men [*De Virg. Vel.* 2]. Tertullian reasons that it is because of their hair, that which Apuleius' Lucius calls a woman's greatest beauty [*Metam.* 2.8], that also virgins should be veiled [*De Virg. Vel.* 7]. In the same context he also comments on the fact that married women sometimes seek alternative head coverings:

*Mitris enim et lanis quaedam non velant caput, sed conligant, a fronte quidem protectae, qua proprie autem caput est, renudae; aliae modice linteolis, credo, ne caput premant, nec ad aures usque demissis cerebro tenus operiuntur.*

For some, with their mitres and woollen bands, do not veil their head, but bind it up; protected indeed, in front, but where the head properly lies, bare. Others are to a certain extent covered over the region of the brain with linen coifs of small dimensions - I suppose for fear of pressing the head - and not reaching quite to the ears.

[*De Virg. Vel.* 17.2-3]

In the 4<sup>th</sup> century Augustine too instructed his sister's nuns that their hair should be well covered [*Ep.* 211.10].

From the same period but from a pagan context Aelia Arisuth, illustrated in Figure 7.25 above, wears the kind of turban which Tertullian is describing in this passage. Luxorius implies in the following epigram that a turban was particularly worn by women:

*In spadonem regium qui mitellam sumebat:*

*Rutilo decens capillo  
Roseoque crine ephebus  
Spado regius mitellam  
Capiti sui locavit.*

*Proprii memor pudoris,  
Bene conscius quid esset,  
Posuit, cogente nullo,  
Fuerat minus quod illi.*

*About a royal eunuch who put on a turban:*

A youthful eunuch of the royal household, resplendant in his reddish hair and flame-coloured locks, placed a turban upon his head. Mindful of his own modesty, knowing well what he was, he put on, with nobody forcing him, what had not been appropriate to him.

[*Epigr.* 12]

Essentially then, as a man it would have been inappropriate or absurd for him to wear a turban.<sup>110</sup> On the other hand, a turban also appears to be the headdress of the man watching a threshing scene in a mosaic from Zliten reproduced in Figure 9.9, which would indicate that dress codes were not as rigid as literature sometimes leads us to believe. Possible only the Vandals (and the eunuch from the colour of his hair appears to be one) saw the turban as effeminate or not following the proper Christian divisions between men and women. Certainly Tertullian, following Paul, felt that it was improper for a man to cover his head [*De Virg. Vel.* 8.1]. Bender (1994: 147) ascribes the turban's origin to the Near Eastern influence of the mitra, which was fastened by tying ribbons under the chin. Herodotus mentions it (μίτρη) in reference to the Babylonians [1.195] and to the Cyprians [7.90]. The Phoenician turban was fairly low and worn by



FIGURE 7.27 ORANT FIGURE  
WITH TURBAN

<sup>110</sup> Eunuchs in Late Antiquity are discussed in HERRIN (1983): 'In search of Byzantine women', 181-2, and for Classical and Late Antiquity by ROLLER (1998): 'The ideology of the eunuch priest'. The references to the *rutilo...capillo* and *roseoque...crine* refers with emphasis to the Vandal colouring. In the *Metamorphoses* [7.27] the 'chorus of catamites' (*chorus cinaedorum*) in the service of the Syrian goddess also wear turbans (*mitellis*).



men and women (Charles-Picard *et al* 1961: 136).<sup>111</sup> The turban of the orant figure in the fragmentary relief (Figure 7.27), dated to the early 5<sup>th</sup> century, confirms that this head covering was also practised among Christian women of Late Antiquity in Roman Africa (Fournet-Pilipenko 1961/2: 103).<sup>112</sup>

During the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> centuries women's portraits in sculpture (as for example Figure 8.3) sometimes exhibited a hairstyle which bore some similarity to the turban, but which probably had its ancestor in the turban-like arrangement of the *vittae* or the *infula* which we see in the portraits of the Vestals from the Roman Forum,<sup>113</sup> and in Figure 6.6. The hairstyle consisting of a circle of braids and D'Ambra (2000: 109) in fact calls it 'the turban hairstyle'. She speculates that these coiffures may have been designed to evoke the 'authority and discipline of a venerable priestess', and a turban is also worn by a woman assisting in sacrifice to Saturn illustrated on the Boglio stele (Figure 12.2), who may very well have been a priestess. As for the turban hairstyle, it is likely that these were wigs since they would have required unnaturally long hair, in which case women would actually have been wearing a head-covering which preserved their modesty (2000: 109-110). Whether veiled, turbaned or wigged, it would appear that women who wanted to be seen as modest kept their own hair covered.<sup>114</sup>

The Vandal rulers, according to Procopius [*De Bell. Vand.* 4.6.6-8] took rather well to the luxuries of the Roman African cities. They dressed in silk and gold, but insisted that their retainers wear barbarian dress, whether they were Vandal or African (Randers-Pehrson 1983: 159). To some extent they retained their own fashions, even for women, who wore their own particular Germanic style jewellery, of which some examples have been recovered in Hippo, Carthage, Thuburbo Maius and Mactaris (Mahjoubi *et al* 1981: 501).

The *Tablettes Albertini* date to the Vandal period. The items of clothing mentioned in the dowry list of Geminia Ianuarilla<sup>115</sup> included linen and woollen clothing, and slippers made from sheepskin, which sounds rather more Berber than Roman (Raven 1984:200-201).<sup>116</sup> Geminia's great-grandfather, Flavius Geminus Catullinus, had once owned the domain, the *fundus Tuletianos*, and she and her parents now lived on a part of the estate. Nevertheless, her family was certainly wealthy enough to give their daughter a dowry worth several hundred olive trees.<sup>117</sup>

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<sup>111</sup> Silius Italicus mentions that among the Nubae the men covered their heads with 'many folds of linen' (*tempora multiplici mos est defendere lino*) [*Pun.* 3.271]. A turban is mentioned among the items of women's clothing mentioned by Arnobius of Sicca [*Adv. Nat.* 2.23].

<sup>112</sup> FOURNET-PILIPENKO (1961-62): 'Sarcophages romaines de Tunisie', cites a 1907 article by A. Delattre on the cult of the Virgin in Africa, who claims that the turban is recognizable as the *flammeum* or bridal veil worn by virgins. This article was unfortunately unavailable to me, but while the turban and the veil generally may share some symbolism, there is no real physical similarity except in its function as a head covering. Apart from Africa and the Near East, the turban does not seem to have been common in the rest of the Roman Empire.

<sup>113</sup> The *infula* was a white woollen fillet wound around the head at least five times, and falling to the shoulders in loops.

<sup>114</sup> We can see this also from the mosaic from San Vitale, portraying Theodora's elaborate crown - at least no hair is visible from the front (her two nearest companions have patterned cloths covering theirs, the others have elaborately dressed hair).

<sup>115</sup> The list is reminiscent of an Egyptian papyrus from the early 2<sup>nd</sup> century where the dowry contains a house, land, jewellery, clothing, toilet articles, other paraphernalia and a slave girl. This papyrus is collected in H.A. SANDERS, ed. (1947): *Michigan papyri VII: Latin papyri in the University of Michigan collection*, Ann Arbor, University of Michigan Press, 21-27 nr. 434.

<sup>116</sup> Similar items, such as sheepskin clothing, a handkerchief, a fillet, slippers, are mentioned by Arnobius of Sicca (late 3<sup>rd</sup> century) in discussing the purpose of clothing [*Adv. Nat.* 2.23].

<sup>117</sup> The exact location of the domain is unknown, but it is thought to have been somewhere between modern Négrine and Gafsa (Raven



### III. THE ACTIVITIES OF VIRTUE

We now pass from the intangible virtues of character to those of a more quantifiable nature, such as industry, thrift and activities associated with motherhood. As mentioned above, these are mentioned far less frequently than the virtues of modesty and fidelity, which is perhaps an indication that to some extent at least they were taken for granted.

#### **Motherhood**

The importance of fertility and of bearing children has already been discussed as one of the most significant reasons for marriage. Dixon (1988: 25) points out that for the Romans public expression of familial love receives greater emphasis from the late Republic onwards, as in the case of conjugal love. In the Hr Zaatli inscription [*CIL* 11294], for example, being a good mother is listed second after the virtue of being a good wife. It follows therefore that the role of the mother in the lives of her children was also the subject of a certain amount of idealization.

#### **Mothers' relationships with children**

##### **(i) Early nurturing:**

In attempting to find out more about the Roman African mother's relationship with her children one is once again confronted with on the one hand an ideal representation, and on the other the reality of social practice, the latter being much more difficult to ascertain. In addition there is also the advice literature of the medical writers (on the issue of breastfeeding, for example). Tacitus gives expression to the general Roman ideal:<sup>118</sup>

*Nam pridem suus cuique filius, ex casta parente natus, non in cellula emptae nutricis, sed gremio ac sinu matris educabatur, cuius preacipuas laus erat tueri domum et inservire liberis*

In the good old days every man's son, born in wedlock, was brought up not in the chamber of some hireling nurse, but in his mother's lap and at her knee, and that mother could have no higher praise than that she managed the house and gave herself to her children. [*Dialog. de Orat.* 28.4]

In Tacitus' own time, however, breastfeeding in élite circles was actually performed more often by a wet nurse (*nutrix*) than by the mother herself.<sup>119</sup> The evidence from Roman Africa presents the same ambiguity between ideal and reality, but the emphasis falls more heavily on the involvement of the mother in breastfeeding. Only four inscriptions<sup>120</sup> of *nutrices* have been found in the whole of Roman Africa (compared to the 69 examples for Rome (Bradley 1986: 204-206)), for example. Our main literary source is Augustine, who gives evidence of both practices, even within the same household. This discrepancy with the balance of the evidence from

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1984: 200).

<sup>118</sup> Other authors who refer to maternal breastfeeding as an ideal of bygone days: Aulus Gellius, *NA* 12.1; Pseudo-Plutarch, *De Amore Proliis* 3 and *De Liberis Educandis* 5 and Tacitus, *Dial. de Orat.* 2.39. General discussion of this ethos in the Roman context in GOUREVITCH (1984): *Le mal d'être femme: la femme et la médecine dans la Rome antique*, 233-260, with examples from Rome and Roman Egypt.

<sup>119</sup> BRADLEY (1986): 'Wet-nursing at Rome'; DIXON (1988): *The Roman mother*, 3; 120. From the late Republic on 'There is reason to believe that most children of almost all status groups spent more than the two first years of their life with their nurse' (Nielsen 1998: 66 n.30). Scholars have suggested a variety of possible reasons for this custom, from the inability to breastfeed or the mother's premature death (Garnsey 1991: 61) to emotional barriers against potential loss, a mother's vanity, or a desire for more children.

<sup>120</sup> *CIL* 2889, 2917, 13191, 27988.



Rome can be explained by the fact that nearly all our references are derived from individuals who, compared to the context of Rome, do not fall within the élite groups. Augustine, on the other hand, was born to the municipal élite, which seems to be the reason that he gives evidence of both practices. Of course the evidence for Africa is proportionately much less than for Rome, which may also be a determinant in reaching a difference conclusion.

Our evidence indeed forms a very small corpus. In one instance, Iulius Secundus of Caesarea, probably of humble status, commends his wife, Rubria Festa [AE 1995, 1793], for the fact that she nurtured her children with her own milk (*Quinque natos lacte mater ipsa quos aluit suo | sospites superstitesque liquit votorum potens*). It is possible that the fact that her husband makes specific mention of this virtue is in itself an indication that it was an ideal not often met in reality for the commemorative status groups, even at this level.<sup>121</sup>



FIGURE 7.28 WOMAN WITH BABY

The illustration (Figure 7.28) of the crudely made terracotta figurine dated to the 1<sup>st</sup> century AD (Charles-Picard 1959: 406) could represent a *nutrix*, but if this is the case she was probably a freedwoman, since it is unlikely that as a slave she should be veiled.<sup>122</sup> But if this figurine should represent the mother of the child it must have been a woman of humble status, or otherwise an example of abstract idealism.<sup>123</sup> The rough execution makes it more likely that she is of a lower status group, possibly a freedwoman, either nurse or mother. In her right arm she may be giving her breast for feeding, or holding something like a feeding bottle - the primitive execution renders it difficult to make out.<sup>124</sup> The emotional interplay between the woman and the child even in this unrefined illustration is conveyed through the positioning of the body and the supporting arm which cradles the child.<sup>125</sup>

In the Christian African context the breastfeeding mother takes on an additional virtuous aspect (Nielsen 1998: 62). Augustine himself

<sup>121</sup> This is the interpretation of BRADLEY (1986): 'Wet-nursing at Rome', 201-202, of a similar epitaph from Rome.

<sup>122</sup> As discussed above, Christian women of all levels of society took to wearing the veil, normally reserved for women of high status, and even dressed as matrons, but there is no other evidence for suggesting that the figure is Christian in this early period. DIXON (1988): *The Roman mother*, 106, notes that in composite pictures or scenes mothers are usually distinguished from midwives and nurses because they are depicted seated, while nurses stand and midwives crouch, but this is usually in scenes where the mother has just given birth. Feeding a child is more likely to have been done in a seated position, regardless of the status of the woman. Compare for example the tombstone for a *nutrix* illustrated in JACKSON (1988): *Doctors and diseases in the Roman Empire*, 100-101, where a 3<sup>rd</sup> century tombstone from Cologne depicts the nurse Severina seated in a high backed chair normally identified with élite representations.

<sup>123</sup> Cornelia, mother of the Gracchi, for example, was honoured by Augustus with a statue as the symbol of Roman motherhood, but she is not depicted with her sons, either as infants or as adults. Only the inscription on the base mentions 'to the mother of the Gracchi' [CIL 6.31610].

<sup>124</sup> An ancient Roman feeding bottle is illustrated in DIXON (1988): *The Roman mother*, plate 10. A number of Punic feeding bottles have also been found, egg-shaped vases with funnelled necks wrapped in cloth (see illustrations in CINTAS (1950): *Céramique punique*, p. 488, plate xxxiii).

<sup>125</sup> KALAVREZOU (1990): 'Images of the mother - when the virgin Mary became *Meter Theou*', 165, contrasts Classical portraits of motherhood with the frontal and formal depictions of the Byzantine era, which avoid any actions or gestures between mother and child.



gives a great deal of attention to it. He tells how mother and baby related in his *Confessiones* [1.6.7- 1.7.11] or how mothers used a bitter paste on their nipples to wean their child [*Enarr. in Ps.* 30.2.12].<sup>126</sup> In two other instances he describes the mother breastfeeding her child [*Enarr. in Ps.* 130 and *Serm.* 117], the mother taking care of the infant, who cannot eat the food on the table and needs its mother to feed it. But even for Christians there were no hard and fast rules. Augustine himself was breastfed by his mother as well as nurses, whom he had to share with his siblings [*Conf.* 1.6.7- 1.7.11], and even in the idealized Christian context there could be some duality about the role of the mother. Perpetua had already rejected her role of the dutiful Roman daughter, and her attitude to her own infant son - she first has him with her in prison [*Passio P & F* 3.8], then gives him into her mother and brother's care [*Passio P & F* 3.8; 6.8] - reflects the ambivalence which must have existed in contemporary society regarding the demands of Christianity and regular social norms.<sup>127</sup> Hilarianus tried to persuade the young woman back to the normal values of a young Roman *matrona*:<sup>128</sup>

*Parce, inquit, canis patris tui, parce infantiae pueri. Fac sacrum pro salute imperatorum.*

Have pity on your father's grey head; have pity on your infant son. Offer the sacrifice for the welfare of the emperors. [*Passio P & F* 6.3]

He met with no success. Martyrdom took precedence over motherhood and other family ties. Perpetua herself states that after the sentence was passed:

*Et quomodo Deus voluit, neque ille amplius mammas desideravit neque mihi fervorem fecerunt ne sollicitudine infantis et dolore mammarum macerarer.*

As god willed, the baby had no further desire for the breast, nor did I suffer any inflammation; and so I was relieved of any anxiety for my child and of any discomfort in my breasts. [*Passio P & F* 6.8]

This is also the case with Felicity, the slave girl who was martyred with Perpetua and her companions, who finds herself fortunate that her baby was prematurely born so that she may be executed along with the others [*Passio P & F* 15.1-2]. Tertullian reminds Christians in his letter *Ad Martyras* that they themselves could pray for and help other Christians, and in one sense Perpetua, rejecting the maternal role of blood family, took on another maternal role, that of the care for the other Christians in the group.

The highly dramatized tale of Victor Vitensis also refers to the conflict between motherly love and motherly pride:

*Ibi et infantuli fuere quam plurimi, quos genetrices materno sequebantur affectu, aliae gaudentes, aliae retrahentes; aliae gaudebant se martyres peperisse, aliae moriendos diluvio rebaptizationis nitebantur a confessione fidei revocare.*

There were many little children in that place, and their mothers followed them with maternal affection, some rejoicing and others summoning their children back; for some rejoiced that they had given birth to martyrs, while others strove to call back from the confession of faith those who would die from the deluge of baptism.

[*Hist. Persec.* 2.29]

Sacrifice before maternal feelings also appears to have been the basis of child sacrifice in the Punic tradition. None of the ancient writers of this pre-Roman tradition is particularly concerned to describe the feelings of

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<sup>126</sup> A device also used by nurses [*Serm.* 311.14].

<sup>127</sup> But by comparison with other female martyrs Perpetua is apparently unusual in expressing any ambivalence. Others, like Thecla in the Apocryphal Acts, express no regrets and simply value the divine and universal more than the more conventional personal relationships. See comments in ASPREGEN (1990): *The male woman: a feminine ideal in the early Church*, 136-143, where she compares these 'defeminised' roles.

<sup>128</sup> Compare also the later version of this theme by Victor Vitensis [*Hist. Persec.* 3.26], a woman, who while being tortured is addressed by her husband as follows: 'Why are you suffering, wife? If you hold me in disdain, at least have mercy on the little ones to whom you gave birth, you evil woman....' (*Quid pateris coniunx? Si me despicias, vel horum quos genuisti miserere, impia, parvulorum...*).



either of the parents of such children.<sup>129</sup> Silius Italicus is the only writer who in his flamboyant poetic style connects the practice with human distress, particularly that of the mother. In the *Punica* [4.765-811] Hannibal's son is demanded for sacrifice, and his wife, Imilce, is described in terms of extreme grief, although her arguments about this custom are probably more Roman than Punic:

*aut si velle nefas superos fixumque sedetque,  
me, me, quae genui, vestris absumite votis.  
cur spoliare iuvat Libycas hac indole terras?*

If you are sure beyond all doubt that wickedness is pleasing to the gods, then slay me, me the mother, and thus keep your vows. Why rob the land of Libya of the promise shown by this child? [4.797-799]

## **(ii) Mothers and their young children**

A number of factors have been taken to act against the bonding of mothers and children under the age of two by some scholars.<sup>130</sup> One of these is the high infant mortality rate which discouraged parents from making an emotional investment at an early age, another was economic factors which may even have led to child exposure. For mothers the fact that in cases of divorce the children were committed to the care of the father may also have been a factor. In her work *The Roman Mother* (1988), it is Dixon's contention that Roman mothers of the upper class were not depicted as more tender or loving towards their young children than fathers. In fact, in the Roman context from the 2<sup>nd</sup> century BC to the 3<sup>rd</sup> century AD, *indulgentia* was for nurses and slaves, and the Roman *matrona* is the *severa mater*. Since in the Roman context studied by Dixon it appears that mothers of the élite did not usually breastfeed their children or were involved in their daily care, it is plausible that the Roman mother's relationship with her children should be similar to that which their father had with them (Dixon 1988: 135). But although there is evidence from Rome that even less financially affluent women used nurses and child minders as late as the early 3<sup>rd</sup> century (Dixon 1988: 3; 233), some working women in Roman Africa of the 4<sup>th</sup> century evidently did not have this luxury. The mosaic from Zliten illustrated in Figure 9.8 depicts women working in the fields but keeping an eye on their children who are playing in the foreground. It would appear that working women did not have the luxury of nurses or slaves. One Christian epitaph [CIL 20913] already mentioned above refers to a woman as *aeducatrix* or 'bringer-up' of her sons, daughters and grandchildren, and grandparents and other relatives may have been utilized as child-minders.<sup>131</sup>

While an African Roman like Fronto expresses his interest in the antics of their young grandson [*Ep. ad Amic.* 1.12], for example, he knows that a 'da' or 'give me' is usually the first word a child utters,<sup>132</sup> it would be difficult to rule mothers out of this type of image, since they have not left their own views on the matter. Breastfeeding at least for the non-élite seems to have been more common than in Rome, which would imply

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<sup>129</sup> Of course these children need not necessarily have been their own. Plutarch [*Mor.* 2.493] describes how Carthaginian parents offered their own children, and those who had none would buy children from the poor or use slave children. Diodorus tells us that this change angered the gods so that they delivered Carthage into the hands of her enemies [Diod. Sic. 20.14]. See also Justinus [18.6]; Lactantius [*Div. Instit.* 1.21].

<sup>130</sup> The argument for ancient parental indifference to children in general upheld in the works of ARIÈS (1962): *Centuries of childhood*, and SHORTER (1975): *The making of the modern family*. Opposed chiefly on the basis of the evidence of medical writers, GARNSEY (1991): 'Child rearing in ancient Italy', 48-65.

<sup>131</sup> Also mentioned on p. 67. Quintilian also speaks of his son being raised by a grandmother using this term (*avia educans*) [*Instit. Orat.* 6 praef. 8]. Grandparents as educators in this basic sense are also mentioned by Augustine [*Conf.* 1.6.8, 1.7.11].

<sup>132</sup> A large variety of examples in EYBEN (1980/81): 'Family-planning in Graeco-Roman Antiquity' with numerous references to modern literature.



more contact between mother and child. Augustine also describes a man of the forum becoming a father and descending to 'baby talk' [*In Ioh. Ev. Tract.* 7, 23]. As proof of individual differences we can compare the views of Tertullian [*De Exhort. Cast.* 12.5], who uses children as an argument *against* marriage, the *importunitas liberorum*.<sup>133</sup>

The quotation from Tacitus' *Dialogus de Oratoribus*<sup>134</sup> indicates that the primary role of the ideal Roman mother was not so much to physically nurture her children as to assume responsibility for her children's education in transmitting the general ethos - moral and intellectual - of Roman custom and tradition, as discussed in Chapter 4. We are informed by Apuleius [*Apol.* 68.2; 85.5; 86.4] that Pudentilla showed an interest in the education of her sons,<sup>135</sup> and even though it is in his interest to show her to be a good mother who would not financially disadvantage her sons for the sake of her new husband, one imagines that with one son present in the audience he could hardly have strayed too far from the truth. Whatever the case may be, Pudentilla is portrayed as conforming to convention for the Roman mother, and these conventions were clearly active in Africa. Augustine's mother Monica gained the financial support of a local benefactor, Romanianus, to continue Augustine's education after the death of his father [*Conf.* 3.4; *Contra Acad.* 2.3]. At the end of the 5<sup>th</sup> century Fulgentius as a child was first made to learn Greek literature by his mother Mariana. According to the *Vita* she also did not permit him to learn Latin since she wanted him to be able to speak Greek as if he had been a native Greek speaker [*Vita Fulg.* 1]. Monica believed that a classical education would make her son a better Christian [*Conf.* 2.3.8], a general perception of the educational worth of the Classical canon throughout antiquity and beyond.

The illustration of woman and child in Figure 7.29 could represent a *paedagoga* or a slave woman accompanying a child, perhaps to school, although the hairstyle and crudely rendered *stola* suggest that she is freeborn or of freed status, and more likely the child's mother. If mother and child are represented here, this small crude figurine is probably not a portrait of a specific mother with her child but rather a more allegorical representation of a mother's involvement in her child's young life. It is difficult to make out whether the child is in fact male or female, but if this is a representation of some sort of ideal image, it is more likely that the child is in fact a small boy.



FIGURE 7.29 WOMAN ACCOMPANYING  
A CHILD

### (iii) Later relationships:

Dixon (1988) concludes that the Roman image of the mother, particularly in Republican times, has more to do with the role of the mother towards her adult sons than with our modern image of a mother with babies or small children dandled at the knee. Like the sources centred on Rome, the Roman African evidence does leave a stronger impression of the devotion of mothers to their adult children.

<sup>133</sup> Tacitus comments on a fashion for childlessness in the early empire [*Ann.* 3.25].

<sup>134</sup> Quoted on p. 156.

<sup>135</sup> HUNINK (1998): 'The enigmatic lady Pudentilla', 278 n.4, mentions that it is also likely that Pudentilla financed Pontianus' studies in Athens [*Apol.* 72.3].



This is perhaps not as significant as one might think, given the fact that in the case of mothers and young children the parties involved are less likely to have left written evidence, and of course the later relationship of mother and son was more in the public eye and of greater interest to male authors. Hanson (1999: 27) points out that women were more likely to have a relationship with their children and grandchildren than their husbands as fathers and grandfathers: 'Demographics alone suggest that legends about the all-powerful *patresfamilias* who interfered in their adult children's lives rested on the examples of a very few'. The involvement of mothers in the adult lives of their children is well attested in Roman Africa principally by the evidence of Augustine's own life. The death of Augustine's father made his mother very influential in his life, even to the extent of arranging his marriage, a situation which, it appears, was not very unusual in Late Antiquity and a perfectly normal way of advancing a son's interests and ambitions (Nathan 2000:157-158).<sup>136</sup>

The ideal mother, such as what Apuleius is clearly interested in personifying in Pudentilla, projects concern and interest in her children's well-being even after they reach adulthood:

*Quam condicione cum obstinate propositam videret mulier sapiens et egregie pia, ne quid filiis suis eo nomine incommodaret, facit quidem tabulas nuptiales cum quo iuebatur, cum Sicinio Claro, verum enimvero variis frustrationibus nuptias eludit eo ad, dum puerorum avus fato concessit relictis filius eius heredibus ita, ut Pontianus, qui maior natu erat, fratri suo tutor esset.*

When she saw that nothing could move him to alter the condition that he had laid down, such was her wisdom and so admirable her maternal affection, that to prevent her sons' interests suffering any damage in this respect, she made a contract of marriage with Sicinius Clarus in accordance with her father-in-law's bidding, but by various evasions managed to avoid the marriage until the boys' grandfather died, leaving them as his heirs, with the result that Pontianus, the elder son, became his brother's guardian. [Apol. 68.5-6]

Such motherly concern is seen as perfectly natural, for example in Augustine's letter to Nebridius at Carthage:

*At matrem cogito, ut quae absentiam sani non ferebat, inbecilli multo minus esse laturam.*

But then your mother comes to my mind: if she cannot endure your absence when you are well, she will endure it much less when you are ill. [Aug., Ep. 10]

The most striking and most extended example of a mother's devotion to her son's interest, however, is given by Augustine about his own mother in the *Confessiones*:

*nutrierat filios totiens eos parturiens, quotiens abs te deviate cernebat*

she had brought up her children, so often undergoing again the pangs of childbirth as she saw them straying from You. [Conf. 9.9]

and, adds Augustine in a most telling remark, 'she was very fond of my company, as mothers are wont to be, yet much more than many mothers' (*amabat enim secum praesentiam meam more matrum, sed multis multo amplius*) [Conf. 5.8.15]. He was therefore aware of natural bond between mother and son, but that his own mother's love went beyond this:<sup>137</sup>

*si rebus viventium interessent animae mortuorum et ipsae nos ... me ipsum pia mater nulla nocte desereret, quae terra marique secuta est, ut mecum viveret.*

If the souls of the dead took part in the affairs of the living, ... then my pious mother would not fail to visit me every night, that mother who followed me over land and sea that she might live with me.

[Aug., De Cura pro Mort. Ger. 13.16]

<sup>136</sup> We may see this in direct contravention of the formal and ideal manner of going about things, as expressed by Roman law [Dig. 23.2.16.1 (Paul)] in which a marriage is an arrangement undertaken by the *paterfamilias*. TREGGIARI (1991c): 'Ideals and practicalities in matchmaking in ancient Rome', 98, deduces from the Roman evidence that 'mothers of sons, often visiting other women, were well placed to review nubile daughters', more so than fathers.

<sup>137</sup> For the psychological ramifications of Augustine's writings see POWER (1995): *Veiled desire: Augustine's writing on women*.



It is possible that in some cases sons replaced their fathers in their a mother's affections in a non-carnal sense. In the biography of Fulgentius of Ruspe, for example, we are told that as a good Christian Fulgentius was subject to this parents, and that his mother was made happy and consoled in the loss of her husband by the excellence of her son [*Vita Fulg.* 1]. In this case the description of Mariana's love for her son as 'excessive' [4] has more to do with the fact that she wished to dissuade her son from entering the monastery, to which the whole of Chapter 4 in the *Vita* is devoted.

Apart from our single example of Perpetua who consulted her mother about her own child while in prison, and into whose charge she gave her baby, there is no evidence on adult mother-daughter relationships, but this is not very surprising as such relationships in antiquity were seldom of interest to male authors. The role of the mother as an example to her daughter is generally understood, whether for good or for bad.<sup>138</sup>

Disrespect towards one's mother was frowned upon by the Romans, regardless of the more personal aspects of the relationship. Augustine [*Ep.* 34.2] relates an incident where a young man (whom he describes as an unfilial son with Donatist inclinations) beat his mother and also left the Church. Augustine links the disrespect towards the natural mother with the disrespect towards the mother Church.<sup>139</sup> In this condemnation public opinion was no different to what it had been in Apuleius' day, when he penned the following highly rhetorical passage:

*O infelix uterum tuum, Pudentilla, o sterilitas liberis potior, o infausti decem menses, o ingrati XIII anni viduitatis! Vipera, ut audio exeso matris utero in lucem proserpit atque ita parricidio gignitur: at enim tibi a filio iam adulto acerbiores morsus viventi et videnti offeruntur. Silentium tuum laniatur, pudor tuus carpitur, pectus tuum foditur, viscera intima protrahuntur.*

O your unlucky womb, Pudentilla! Barrenness would have been better than children! O those lamentable ten months, O those fourteen thankless years of widowhood. The viper, I am told, reaches the light of day only by gnawing through its mother's womb and is thus born by parricide. But your son is full-grown and the wounds he deals are far bitterer, for they are inflicted on you while you yet live and see the light of day. He insults your reserve, he tears away your dignity, he wounds your breast and exposes your inmost organs. [*Apol.* 85.5-6]<sup>140</sup>

Mothers appear to have been held in higher esteem than wives. Augustine's father Patricius also appears to have had more respect for his own mother than for his wife:<sup>141</sup>

*itaque posteaquam ille, et matri obtemperans et curans familiae disciplinam....*

when he therefore, out of obedience for his mother and out of a care to a well-ordered family ... [*Conf.* 9.9]

Also in the family of Pudentilla, after a reconciliation with his mother Pudentilla and his subsequent death, Pontianus' will left everything to his mother and brother, and nothing except the household linen to his wife, although admittedly this may have been to avoid the ambitions of her father Rufinus [*Apol.* 97.20].

Opposition to a mother was complicated, since a son or daughter's *pietas* to their mother was not necessarily seen as dependent on their mother's behaviour towards her children. In her analysis of the relationship between senatorial and imperial mothers and sons, Dixon (1988: 182-187) notes that matters were compounded by the fact that sons sometimes owed their positions to their mothers' influence, and that mothers' awareness of this

<sup>138</sup> As discussed above, p. 64.

<sup>139</sup> See also Augustine [*Serm.* 323.1], on what he considers is due to a mother.

<sup>140</sup> Butler's translation amended by HUNINK (1998): 'The enigmatic lady Pudentilla', 288 n.27. HUNINK (1997): *Pro se de magia*, 232, also points out the rhetorical polarization of the 'good, repenting son', Pontianus, and the 'bad son', Pudens in the *Apologia* (see especially at *Apol.* 94).

<sup>141</sup> Compare the discussion of Augustine's description of the behaviour of his father towards Monica, his mother, above p. 117-118.



and subsequent demands led to conflict, for example in the case of Livia and Tiberius, or Agrippina and Nero. It appears from the accounts in Tacitus and Suetonius that the sons' rejection of maternal intervention was publicly endorsed, but in the case of Nero, for example, his neglect of the politenesses due to a parent and the matricide were condemned (Dixon 1988: 186). Some of these aspects are touched upon in the relationship between Augustine and his mother Monica. Clearly Monica did her best to advantage her son's interests, but although Augustine expresses his appreciation of this fact, it does not prevent him from fleeing her ministrations:

*... matri, quae me profectum atrociter paluxit, et usque ad mare secuta est, sed fefelli eam vilenter me tententem, utt aut revocatet aut mecum pergeret, ... Et mentitus sum matri, et illi matri, et evasi;*  
... my mother who bewailed my journey, and followed me to the sea shore. But I deceived her, though she held on to me and wanted me to go back with her or that she go with me... Thus I lied to my mother, and so good a mother too, and so got away from her. [Conf. 5.8]

Augustine clearly seems to have experienced some conflict between his own wish for independence and what was considered dutiful behaviour of a son towards a mother.

#### (iv) the image of the Church as Mother

The ideal image of the nurturing mother was taken up by Christian African authors for the Church. Africa may have been particularly fertile ground for this image, as Brown (1967: 212) notes: 'In a land which, to judge from Monica, had a fair share of formidable mothers, the *Catholica*, the Catholic Church, was The Mother'. Tertullian's allegorical comment is a typical forerunner of this image in Latin literature:<sup>142</sup>

*inter carnis alimenta ... quae vobis et domina mater ecclesia de uberibus suis ...*  
... the nourishment for the body which our Lady Mother the church [offers] from her breast. [Ad Mart. 1.1]

and similarly Cyprian:

*Una mater fecunditatis successibus copiosa; filius fetu nascimur, illius lacte nutrimur, spiritu eius animamur*  
There is one mother, who is prolific with offspring, generation after generation: of her womb we are born, by her milk we are fed, from her spirit our souls draw their life breath. [De Eccl. Cath. Unit. 5]

The ideal nurturing image refers only to the natural mother. Augustine, who himself relates how he was

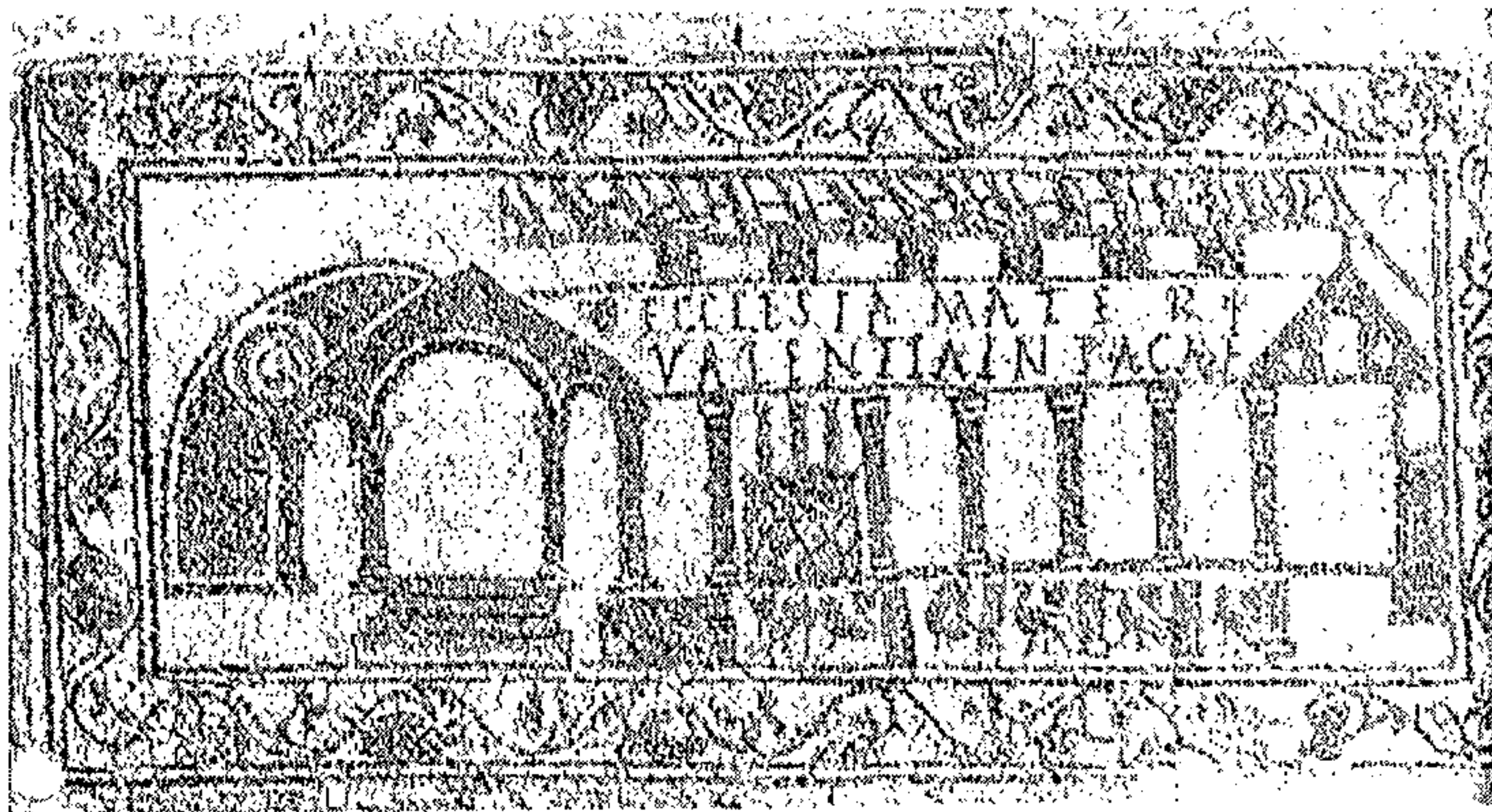


FIGURE 7.30 TOMB MOSAIC OF THE 'ECCLESIA MATER'

<sup>142</sup> Earlier examples of this comparison are extant from Greek Christian literature: Eusebius, *Hist. Eccles.* 5.1.1-2.8



breastfed by both mother and nurses, makes no mention of the latter when he uses the ideal image which compares his own mother's milk with the nourishment of the Church or the Scriptures [*Conf.* 3.4-5]. The image of the Church as mother was also carried into mosaic art. A tomb mosaic from Thabraca illustrated above shows a representation of a church with the text 'ECCLESIA MATER | VALENTIA IN PACAE'. Dunbabin (1978: 192) points out that to represent the building rather than an abstract symbol is an unparalleled example, certainly a much more immediate juxtaposition of abstract image and physical reality than we see in literature.

### **Ideals for husbands and fathers**

While the previous pages have been devoted to ideal wives and mothers, this may create the misleading impression that no attention was paid to the 'private' or domestic role of husbands and fathers. It would be wrong to assume that there were not also epitaphs such as the following, commemorating ideal masculine family roles:

LAMBÈSE (LAMBÆSIS) [CIL 2967]  
D(IS) M(ANIBUS) S(ACRUM) | RUFI RUFI | NI> (CENTURIONI) LEG(IONIS) III | AUG(USTAE) IULIA ZI | ORA CO(N)IUGI  
| INCOMPARABILI | ET RUFINUS VI | TALIS PATRI DULCISSI | MO FECERUNT VI | XIT ANNIS LV QUI LEG | IS DIC:  
SIT TIBI TER | RA L(E)VIS  
Consecrated to the souls of the departed. To Rufus Rufinus, centurion of the Third Augustan Legion. Iulia Ziora for her incomparable husband, and Rufinus Vitalis for the kindest father, made this. He lived 55 years. You who read this, wish that the earth may rest lightly on him.

Or the inscription erected for the husband of Aurelia Mnesitheia, whose husband loved their children with as much tenderness as she did herself.

CONSTANTINE (CIRTA) [CIL 7228; CLE 561; ILALG II 829]  
CASTA PUDICA, FUI MNESITHEIA, [B]ONA MARITO IN FIDE QUA POTU[I] | AURELIA CONIUNX QUI MECUM SINE  
LITE FUIT VIXITQUE MARITO | NATOS AMAVIT UNA MECUM ET LAUS REFERENDA, ROGATIANE TIBI VI | XI  
FESTINANS VIVERE SEMPER  
I was Mnesitheia Aurelia, chaste and modest, good and faithful to my husband as far as I was able, he who lived with me without quarrel. Our children he loved as one with myself and praise must be given to you in return, Rogatianus. I have lived hastening towards eternal life.

The fact that inscriptions which mention husbands and fathers are less common than those for wives and mothers does not mean that wives cared for their husbands less than vice versa, but in all likelihood the erection of a public epitaph for a good husband and father (essentially private attributes) did not have the social/status benefits for the women (or anyone else) who erected them that men seem to have accrued from praising their wives and indirectly themselves. Wives did not, it seems, generally take credit for having good husbands, or for generating good qualities in them in the way that men sometimes did for wives. In addition women often had fewer means for commemoration and they did not survive their husbands as often as the other way round.<sup>143</sup> According to Treggiari (1991: 242) a liberal use of adjectives was more common in the epitaphs of wives than on those of husbands, but she attributes this to these 'socio-economic causes which make commemoration by husbands more common, rather than to any lack of appreciation of husband's merits or affection'.

In the account of Perpetua the emphasis on her father (contrasted with the absence of even the name of her husband) accentuates the importance of blood ties, although of course we do not know the precise reason why Perpetua's husband does not visit her in prison and is not mentioned by her. Salisbury (1997:8) mentions the importance of the continuation of the family line, the 'importance of vertical continuity between generations'

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<sup>143</sup> See Chapter 8 on age for Roman African women.



although this would of course not have been as important in the case of daughters as in that of sons, and we are told that Perpetua did have a surviving brother.<sup>144</sup> The absence of Perpetua's husband is a curious and inexplicable point.<sup>145</sup> She was clearly not widowed, even though this was possible at such a young age, as in the case of the famous Melania the Elder [Pallad., *De Hist. Laus.* 46]. The *Passio* would surely not have failed to mention this state, since for Christians it was almost more desirable than marriage. Divorce also seems unlikely in terms of the explicit assertion that she was respectably married. The most likely explanation, though a speculative one, is that Perpetua's husband was not a Christian and perhaps had repudiated her when she was arrested, and for that reason never came to see her in prison. In her diary Perpetua states that her father 'alone of all my kin would be unhappy to see me suffer' (*quod solus de passione mea gavisurus non esset de toto genere meo*) [*Passio P & F* 5.6]. Since she clearly had support from both her brother and her mother, this may be a reference to her husband's side of the family. From a Christian point of view Perpetua's act may seem noble, but from the perspective of a pagan husband it must have been the very opposite, an enormous social disgrace, not only because it was a public exhibition, but also because it was the religion which had come up 'from below, through the artisan class' (Freund 1978: 470). Tertullian writing in ca. 212 refers to the proportion of the population that would have been Christian at that time, implying not only that this was quite substantial but also that Christians were present at every level of society, even of the senatorial order, and that everyone would lose relatives and friends [*Ad Scap.* 5.2]. When in the years 198 to 203 Tertullian wrote that women should rather marry Christian men of lower status than pagans of their own standing [*Ad Uxor.* 2.8.4], he may very well have been thinking of the case of Perpetua whose execution had taken place at about that time, and whose martyrdom does not appear to have had the support of her probably pagan husband.<sup>146</sup>

### The *matrona* as *custos* of the home and other virtuous domestic activities<sup>147</sup>

The active or practical role of the wife and mother in the Roman African household has been given a certain amount of attention by our sources. Tertullian indirectly describes the activities of the wife in the home when he addresses men:

*Scio quibus causationibus coloremus insatiabilem carnis cupiditatem. Praetendimus necessitates adminiculorum: domum administrandam, familiam regendam, loculos claves custodiendas, lanificium dispensandum, victum procurandum, curas comminuendas ... Nunc et consors onerum domesticorum necessaria est?*

I know the pretexts which we allege in order to conceal our insatiable lust after the pleasures of the flesh. We pretend that we need assistance in taking care of the house, controlling the domestics, keeping an eye on coffers and keys, supervising the spinning, managing the kitchen, sharing cares and responsibilities.... Granted now that a wife is necessary to help you bear the burden of domestic duties. [De Exhort. Cast. 12.1-12]

Tertullian is simply amplifying the Roman *mos maiorum* which defined the woman's traditional role as twofold,

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<sup>144</sup> SALLER (1984b): 'Familia, domus and the Roman conception of the family', 339, points out that Fronto also ignores the agnatic principle when he includes his daughter's children in the wish that *nostra familia* will be increased *liberis ac nepotibus* [*Ep. ad Amic.* 1.12].

<sup>145</sup> LEFKOWITZ (1981): 'The motivations for St Perpetua's martyrdom', 56-57, proposes from a Jungian perspective that this neglect of the husband figure is a rejection of 'unconscious incest', 'a close emotional pairing of father and daughter which results from a desperate attempt to keep a disintegrating family together'.

<sup>146</sup> The suggested chronology of BARNES (1971): *Tertullian. A historical and literary study*, 55, for the writings of Tertullian has been followed here.

<sup>147</sup> On this aspect for Rome itself, see PEARCE (1974): 'The role of the wife as *custos* in ancient Rome', 16-33.



to manage the house and to look after the children.<sup>148</sup> Such a role was not without honour, however, and often praised in epitaphs. At Mactaris for example Pallia Saturnina [CIL 647] desired 'nothing more than the joy of her husband's (Iulius Maximus) house' (*nihil potius cupiens quam ut sua guaderet domus*). Traditionally the Roman *matrona* was the *custos/conservatrix* or guardian of the house who looked after its inhabitants, she was *vigilans*, the custodian of the hearth.<sup>149</sup> She was responsible for the welfare of those who lived in her home, even, it seems, when they were not within its walls. In their journey to Africa, Antonina, the wife of the Byzantine general Belisarius, preserved her husband's drinking water on board their ship by sinking the jars in sand in the hold of the ship while the rest of the water went bad [Procop., *De Bell. Vand.* 3.13.23-24]. The rest of the company probably would not have had practical and solicitous wives to accompany them.

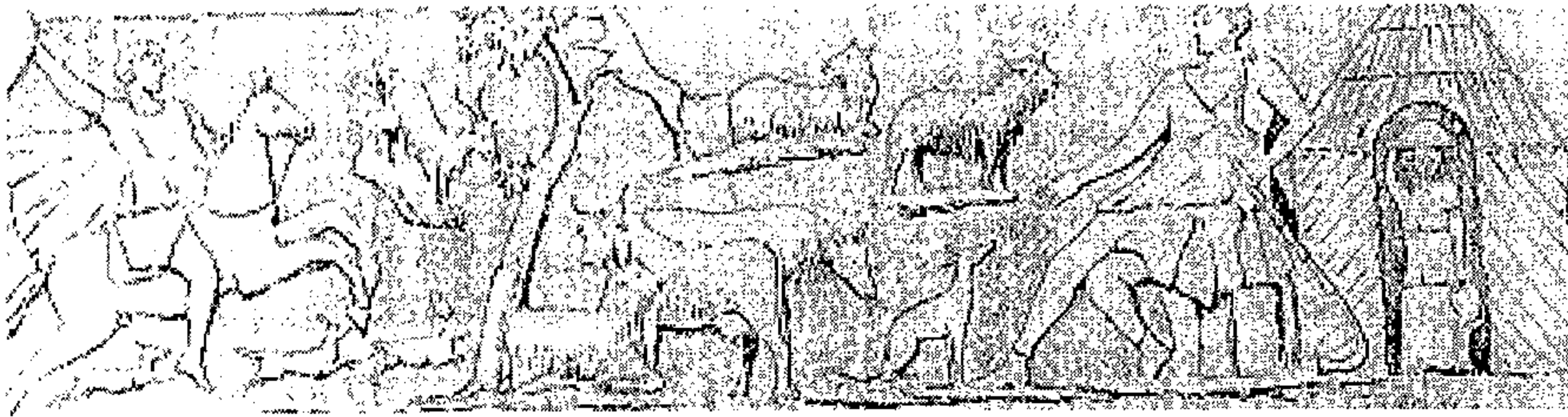


FIGURE 7.31 DRAWING OF A RELIEF FROM A SARCOPHAGUS, RUSICADE

In Figure 7.31 above the woman in the *cippus* is engaged in domestic activity, carrying an item on her head in the manner of African women and a jug in her hand, and emerging from what seems to be a native hut. She is but a background figure to the two main characters, the herdsman/farmer and the rider depicted in the style of the Parthenon frieze.

At Madauros Aurelia Mammosa is particularly commended by her husband for being 'the guardian of the hearth' and 'taking care of the provisions and small things by her frugality throughout her life' (*Genialis custos utpote | quae fuerit | quaeq(ue) penum parvosq(ue) | lares provexerit illi | dum frugi vitam degerit | ingenio | et quae fecundo par | tu numerosa replerit | casta domum trino pig | nore coniugii*) [AE 1919, 46; ILAlg I 2242]. And in another case:

SIGUS  
 POMPONIA FORT[UNULA] | KARA MIH(I) CON[IUNX] | MULTA DILACT[A PER] | ANNIS SUPEROSTI [MAR] | ITU(M)  
 OMNA QUE S[UNT] | NOBIS TUO SUNT QU[AE] | SITA LABOR[E] HON | ESTE MEMORIE | MULIER  
 Pomponia Fortunula, my dear wife, much adored over the years. You were superior to your husband. All that we are is yours, the fruit of your labour. A woman of the honestiores.

In the élite stratum her role was undoubtedly more one of management than hands-on labour - we do not see women of the *honestiores* class carrying items on their heads and jugs in their hands. The actual tasks were performed by those under her authority, slaves or freedmen and women, as is clearly indicated by Tertullian's passage quoted at the beginning of this section. In the *Apologia*, for example, the domestic slaves Apuleius was requested by his accusers to bring as witnesses from Pudentilla's house amounted to fourteen [44.3]. He may of course have limited their number to contain the evidence against him.

<sup>148</sup> As worded by Tacitus (*tueri domum et inservire liberis*) [*Dialog. de Orat.* 28.4]. Quoted in full on p. 156.

<sup>149</sup> The term *conservatrix* is found in CIL 7384 (= ILAlg II, 1185) and CIL 21300. *Cultrix* is mentioned in CIL 9050, but only in the sense of *cultrix pudicitiae*.



As *custos* a matron could have a certain amount of authority and Brown's description of Augustine's congregation as a small community of 'tightly-knit families in which the mother played a dominant role' (1967: 247) is not implausible, although he seems to base this perception mainly on Augustine's portrait of Monica, and from what we know of other wives from the same author, they were less fortunate *vis à vis* their husbands. As an acknowledgement of this female status, wives were therefore sometimes - but not always - given the household keys on marriage (see Tertullian above). Augustine was rather critical of this state of affairs, as in the case of Proba, a widow who managed the family's finances [*Ep.* 130.2.5-3.8]. In another account [*De Serm. Dom. in M.* 2.2.7] Augustine reveals something of popular opinion about stingy wives, relating how it is a common perception that wives are closefisted in domestic affairs and that their husbands, for the sake of tranquillity, hide the fact that they give money to the needy from them. He ridicules this perception by creating the impression that no true Christian wife would begrudge money to the poor, and that practising deceit will not earn God's favour. Wives who are particularly praised for their frugality are few, but it was clearly seen as a virtue by those who commemorated them. To some extent our evidence in this area is once again in contradiction with the evidence for conspicuous consumption, where wives are symbols of their husbands' wealth and influence. We may assume that where such wealth is present, the frugality is less likely to be needed, although this does not excluded this group from being artificially associated with such virtues, which were often also equated with virtues like chastity and modesty.

In the inscription from Hr Zaatli [*CIL* 11294; *ILS* 8444; *ILT* 314], Postumia Matronilia is described as *frugi, efficax, vigilans, sollicita, ... [t]otius industriae et fidei | matrona* (hard-working, thrifty, efficient, vigilant, careful ... a matron of all industry and faith). The degree to which these virtues in a wife were desirable is indicated by the number of individual tombstones with accolades for women of *rarissimae frugalitatis* [*CIL* 134], praising them as *sobria* [*AE* 1989, 804] and for having lived a frugal life [*ILT* 489, *CLE* 2299, *ILAfric* 175] or both [*CIL* 4692, *ILAlg* I 2239, *ILS* 8452], or for their *parsimonia* [*CIL* 152; *ILT* 297; *CLE* 516]. At Carthage Tannonia Annibonia is praised for her frugality and her *disciplina* [*CIL* 24986 = *ILT* 1000], while at Caesarea the epitaph to Tadia Fortunilla also pays tribute to her *frugalitas honesta, | fides cum disciplina* [*CIL* 9520; *ILS* 8445].<sup>150</sup> The praise by Iulius Senteanus for his mother Domintia Caesia may seem rather contradictory (*femina | rarissimae frugalitatis et indulgentissima matrona*) [*CIL* 134], but this is probably due to the use of stock phrases which were used particularly by children of the deceased. Essentially frugality was a virtue which was associated with the self-control so much admired by the Romans in their men and women.<sup>151</sup> The feminine ideal included not overindulging oneself, since then, too, the Roman wife would be wasting her husband's assets, and Fronto's praise for his own wife should be understood as a term of praise in this context:<sup>152</sup>

*Neque est Gratia mea, ut causicorum uxores feruntur, multi cibi.*

<sup>150</sup> Here we may also add the less direct praise of frugality for Iunia Bacc[u]lla who *toleravit paupertatem* [*AE* 1966, 539]. Her particular virtues are discussed briefly by DURRY (1966): 'Iunia Baccula: une inscription du Constantinois', 291.

<sup>151</sup> There is also evidence of over-indulgence with respect to food or wine by men [*Apul., Apol.* 57; 75]. Augustine's severity relating to drunkenness in African congregations - *drunkenness, chambering and wantonness* - [*Ep.* 22.2; *Serm.* 151.4] is influenced by the fact that this took place as a continuation of the Roman African pagan custom of banquets for the dead, particularly popular among the Donatists..

<sup>152</sup> This is a very specific area in which consumption is not encouraged, since otherwise woman as a passive consumer of luxury goods is something in which men take pride, particularly in Late Antiquity. Depictions of women being adorned such as Figure 9.1, for example, signify women of high social rank (Wyke 1994: 141).



Nor is my Gratia a big eater, as lawyer's wives are thought to be.

[Ep. 2.8]

In this context Augustine makes only one negative comment about his mother Monica, which is that as a young girl of 6 she was called the 'little tippler' - she had an immoderate liking for wine:

*Et subrepserat tamen, sicut mihi filio famula tua narrabat, subrepserat ei vinulentia. Nam cum de more puella sobria iuberetur a parentibus de cupa vinum depromere, submisso poculo, qua desuper patet, priusquam in lagunculam funderet merum, primoribus labris sorbebat exiguum quia non poterat amplius sensu recusante.*

Yet a liking for wine crept up on her, as your handmaid told me, her son. For when she, thought to be a sober maiden, was sometimes bidden by her parents to draw wine out of the hogshead, she would hold the pot under the tap and at the mouth of it, before she poured wine into the flagon, wet her lips with a little sip of it, for her taste would not suffer her to take much in.

[Conf. 9.8.18]

Augustine ascribes this illicit wine-sipping (rather like his own pear theft) to youthful excess.<sup>153</sup> Tertullian [Apologet. 6.4-5] fondly recalls the old Roman laws where women who dared to unlock the wine cellar were starved to death, comparing this to the current lax attitudes to women and wine.<sup>154</sup> While the issue is one of self-control, the implication is also male responsibility to keep their women in line.<sup>155</sup> The criticism of women here is probably related to the fear of female promiscuity, where wine would release any remaining inhibitions. The issue of women and overindulgence in food and wine is an old misogynistic *topos* already evident in Old Comedy - Aristophanes makes great use of this theme.<sup>156</sup>

Woolworking symbolized a prudent household manager and had been associated with chastity since before the legend of Lucretia as told by Livy [1.57.6-58]. The Romans were certainly not alone in holding this to be an activity associated with women. A Punic depiction incised on metal dating from the 4<sup>th</sup> century BC shows a woman sitting with distaff and spindle, while the second registrar displays an empty throne or funeral bed, an altar and a candelabrum (Soren *et al* 1990: 155). Working with wool would then seem to have been a virtue for Greek, Punic and Roman women, associated with the domesticity desired of a wife.

Despite resonances, or perhaps because of these, from the other cultures in North Africa, for the Roman period there is not a great deal of evidence for this virtuous activity. In Rome itself, spinning and woolworking are mentioned in inscriptions only until the 2<sup>nd</sup> century, after which this convention was taken for granted and it no longer appears so often on tombstones (Treggiari 1991a: 243). Thus the lack of evidence from Roman Africa is the result of a general abandonment of displaying this virtue in the Roman world during the imperial period, when such jobs were entrusted to slaves (see Tertullian quoted above, referring to supervising the spinning, *lanificim dispensandum*), and such products could even be purchased (Clark 1993: 100).

In Africa Amymone [ILC II, 4639] is commended for being *domiseda*, looking after the affairs of the house, and especially for her skill at spinning but she is one of only two Roman African inscriptions which specify this virtuous activity, the other being Iulia from Ammaedara, praised for being a wool-maker, *lanifica*, at the tender

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<sup>153</sup> For discussion of the symbolic links to the Fall and as a literary counterpoint to Monica's ascendance to grace, see POWER (1995): *Veiled desire*, 72-74.

<sup>154</sup> According to Cato the censor ancient law allowed a husband who smelled alcohol on his wife's breath to take her life (Pomeroy 1975: 153).

<sup>155</sup> Valerius Maximus [6.3.9] for example relates that Egnatius Maecenus who killed his wife for being drunk was not criticized - she deserved what she got because of her lack of self-control: 'It is agreed that any woman who drinks without restraint puts any virtue she may have at risk and risks falling prey to every vice' (translation by Gardner and Wiedemann (1991: 57)).

<sup>156</sup> For example *Lysistrata* 112-114; 194-239; *Ekklesiazusae* 135f; *Thesmophoriazusae* 730f.



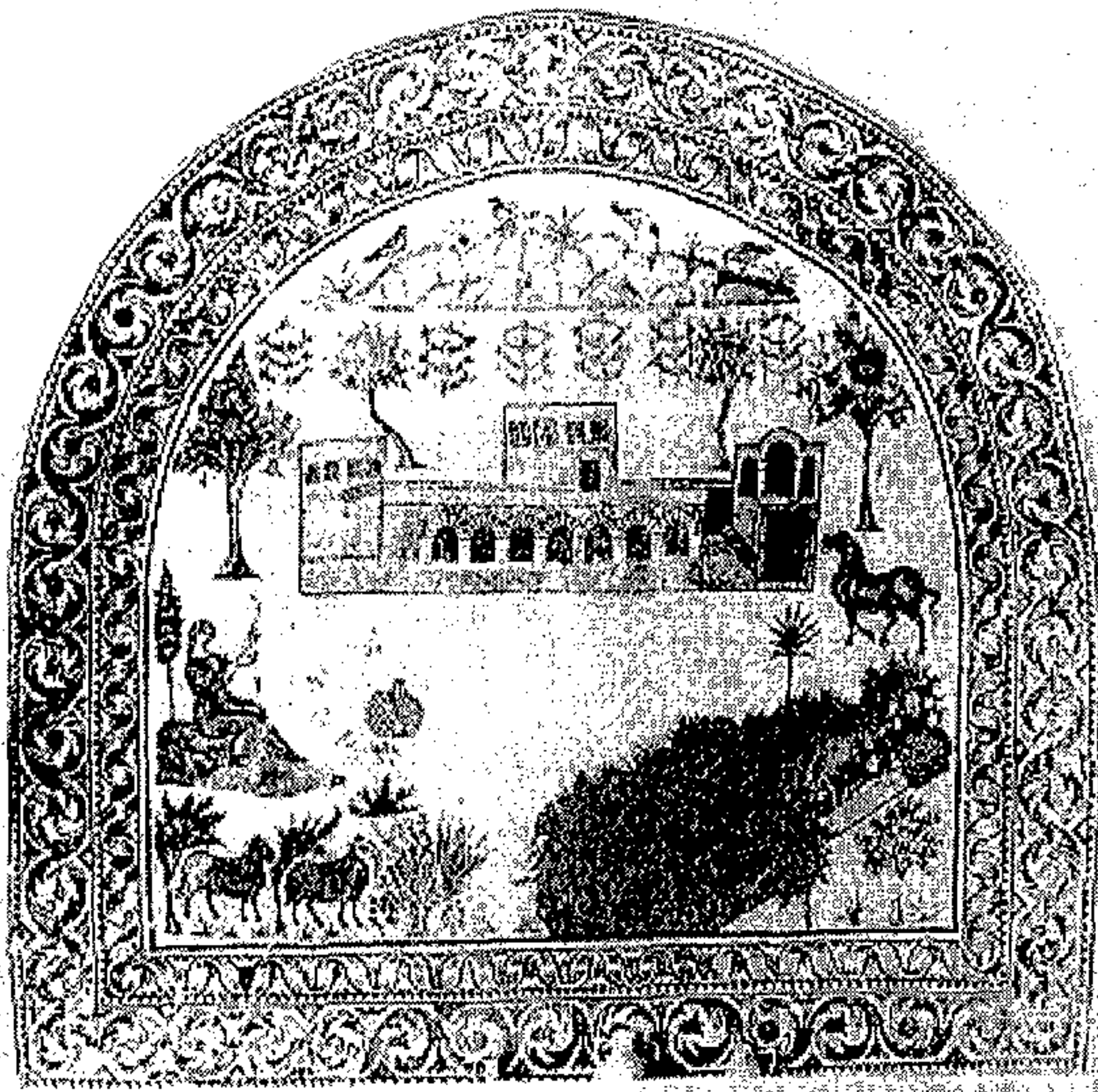


FIGURE 7.32 SPINNING

age of 6! [*ILAfric* 158]. In her work on Ostia, Kampen (1981: 92) points out that in Roman iconography women are also seldom seen spinning and more often just hold the spindle or stand by the spinning wheel as a symbol of their industry. This symbolism resurfaces rather unexpectedly in a 4<sup>th</sup> century mosaic from Thabraca, where the central theme is the wealth of the owner of the estate. The woman seen holding a spindle is presented through her dress and hairstyle as evidence of the wealth of her husband, but also in the traditional manner of a virtuous *matrona*. It is unlikely that she did in fact engage in spinning wool, and the fact that she is undertaking this activity outside the house, where traditionally it was associated with women remaining indoors

also detracts from the veracity of the image. The anomaly may perhaps be explained through a change in attitudes brought about by Christianity. Woolworking resurfaced as part of the ascetic lifestyle, where women showed their humility by taking on 'menial' tasks in the kitchen and also fabric making, already traditionally an activity of the virtuous woman, even if it had become an abstract one. In Augustine's convent community, for example, some of the women were to be put in charge of producing the clothing [*Reg. Inform.* 5.1] (Clark 1993: 103).

By Late Antiquity African mosaics of the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> centuries depict women's idleness as a status symbol for their husbands, whose wealth and power are intimated by their elaborate robes, hunting scenes and large fortress-like houses. The magnificence and grandeur of the life of the nobleman on his estate are typically asserted in another two panelled 4<sup>th</sup> century mosaic. The wife of Gaius Barbarus Pompeianus, the governor of Africa in 400-401 mentioned above,<sup>157</sup> sat in the high backed chair which traditionally conveyed status, further shielded from the sun by a parasol held by her servant.<sup>158</sup>

#### IV. STATUS IN THE HOME AND INTERACTION WITH THE FAMILY

During the first two centuries of the Roman Empire there are no indications that women were confined to a particular part of the house, or that any rooms were set aside for their specific use, although admittedly we do not have a great deal of domestic architecture from this period (as compared to Late Antiquity in the African

<sup>157</sup> The original mosaics no longer exist and are known only from drawings which can be viewed in works mentioned above, p. 72 n. 68.

<sup>158</sup> A typology also attested elsewhere in the Empire, for example on a sarcophagus found near Trier where the merchant hunts and his wife is having her hair done by attendants: 'her inactivity brings him status' (Fantham *et al* 1994: 375-6).



context). Wallace-Hadrill (1988 and 1994) explains the absence of gender differentiation in homes in Herculaneum and Pompeii by the greater importance placed on status of the married partners during the Empire. It would appear, however, that in Africa there was less privacy in a Roman home than in the more traditional Roman *villa*. Roman African houses had no atrium - entertainment of outsiders, for example clients, was conducted in the peristyle, the vestibule or the private basilica. The decoration of the peristyle in particular would convey the owner's high status (Thébert 1987: 358-363): 'African urban élites were immediately drawn to a style of building that enhanced their prestige by bringing into their private houses architectural composition on a scale previously reserved for public monuments' (Thébert 1987: 325). The African urban élite enjoyed living in the manner which emphasized their link with the running of the Roman empire and therefore their status in the eyes of those on the lower rungs of life with which they were surrounded. Augustine also makes some comments on 'honour' or social standing and outward trappings of home and gold plate [*Ennar. in Ps.* 32.2.12, 18; *Serm.* 302.21.19], and the archaeological evidence shows large reception halls for this purpose of public display (Brown 1987: 274). The fact that the owner of the villa now brought the forum to him rather than vice versa had results in the domestic arrangements of the household. Such a public display must have clashed with the increasing tendency to keep virtuous womenfolk from public view, and in the African villas that arose during Late Antiquity, women's quarters seem to have become the norm, as they were elsewhere in the Empire (Brown 1987: 274).

### **ROMAN AS AGAINST OTHER CULTURAL INFLUENCES ON THE CONCEPT OF THE IDEAL *MATRONA***

The general tendencies and aspects of Romanization have already been discussed in Chapter 2, and as a general working definition based on that discussion, Romanization can be taken as the adoption of at least some exterior aspects of Roman culture. The role which women played or were made to play in the process of Romanization and upward mobility was small but not entirely insignificant, as the evidence presented in this and the preceding three chapters has shown.<sup>159</sup>

Much of this evidence shows how completely Roman ideals for women, or at least ideals represented through Roman channels or in a Roman manner, were advertised by the local population, particularly members of the municipal élites. In these instances we actually have to be reminded that these women were not Roman matrons from Rome itself, and only occasionally does the evidence itself explicitly point to this.<sup>160</sup>

#### **Nomenclature and diverse influences**

The manner in which many men and women who were not of Roman stock, or of mixed stock, became Romanized and received Roman names has already been discussed in Chapter 2.<sup>161</sup> Perpetua's family name, Vibius, implies citizenship of at least several generations, when her ancestors had received Roman citizenship.<sup>162</sup>

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<sup>159</sup> In inscriptions Berber names are more common for women than they are for men, reflecting the fact that for the proportion of society which put up inscriptions women participated less fully in the process of Romanization than men.

<sup>160</sup> Examples here have been drawn from cases where ethnic origin is indicated more or less overtly.

<sup>161</sup> See pp. 31-37.

<sup>162</sup> Perpetua's father may have been of senatorial (Barnes 1971: 70) or more probably of decurial (Shaw 1993: 11) rank.



Nevertheless, despite being Roman by name and education, like the emperor Severus, she could speak Punic, and her brother, Dinocrates, bore a Greek name popular with Africans (Ferguson 1969:182). Because Perpetua was a member of the local élite, the veneer of the Roman matron was probably more than just superficial, while her African roots are pushed into the background by the nature of the evidence. In other cases women's names show a combined Roman-Punic-African influence,<sup>163</sup> as for example in the case of Aelia Saturnina [*CIL* 126], the *nomen* Aelia indicated citizenship under one of the Antonines, while the *cognomen* Saturnina betrays African influence,<sup>164</sup> but in most cases like this we know very little about these women or their level of Romanization

A fair proportion of the inscriptions or references quoted up to this point contain women's names which show even more direct Afro-Punic origins. Names like Monica, the mother of Augustine, or Beccut [*AE* 1969/70, 658] were clearly African, despite the otherwise Romanized context which inform us about their existence. Other names like Pescennia Quodvultdeus [*CIL* 870] were modelled on Punic precedent.<sup>165</sup> In some instances (which will be encountered again in later chapters) women had names which were barely Romanized, but yet they occupied Roman priesthoods like the flaminiate, and they played a role in typically Roman benefactions. Women like Fabia Bira [*ILA* 630-632], who also, in the tradition of indigenous Africa, styled herself the 'daughter of Izelta' by the maternal line, was a *flaminica* and donated generously to the community of Volubilis.<sup>166</sup>

As mentioned earlier, the process of Romanization was also accompanied by cultural transfer in the opposite direction to that of Romanization.<sup>167</sup> Pride was taken in local lineage,<sup>168</sup> and Thompson (1969: 145) mentions many descendants of Italian settlers who in 1<sup>st</sup> century AD who gave their children *cognomina* of Punic origin.<sup>169</sup> In the least Romanized provinces it is not surprising to find less evidence of the adoption of Roman names. Not many of the Zegrenian peoples in Mauretania for example show evidence of Roman nomenclature. The Romanized Iuliani<sup>170</sup> married outsiders most of whom bear non-Roman names like 'Faggura' or 'Ziddina', and who were not Roman citizens (Shaw 1986: 75).

### **Physical evidence of contrasting Roman and non-Roman origins**

A number of instances in these chapters dealing with women's private role show a direct juxtaposition of Roman

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<sup>163</sup> A substantial list of Romanized African names for both men and women is provided by THOMPSON (1969): 'Settler and native in the urban centres of Roman Africa', 155 *passim*.

<sup>164</sup> See also SHAW (1982a): 'Lamasba: an ancient irrigation community', 66 n.2 on some issues of nomenclature.

<sup>165</sup> The use of religious names was peculiar to Africa (we see it also in the English puritans much later in history). Augustine's own son was called Adeodatus and there are many examples of such names as Deogratias, Deumhabet, Deusdedit, Habetdeus, Vincemalus and Gaudentius, used for both men and women. This custom had its roots in the Punic practice, where the names are short phrases expressing a divine action e.g. Muttumbaal = gift of Baal (Charles-Picard 1961: 151).

<sup>166</sup> See also Appendix A, nrs. 188-191 for Fabia Bira's involvement in benefactions.

<sup>167</sup> See Chapter 2, especially pp. 29-37.

<sup>168</sup> The following examples have already been mentioned on p. 99. Iulia Setina, of noble birth, and the glory of her race (Madauros) [*ILAlg* I 2240; *CLE* 218], and, in another case from Sicca Veneria, a Numidian aristocrat was turned into a Roman citizen [*CIL* 16159], bearing the name Plancina, while the *cognomen* of her husband, Quintus [A]rruntius Mas[cel], indicates Numidian origin, though he has been given Roman citizenship.

<sup>169</sup> *CIL* 8834, 18829, 226245, and many other examples from THOMPSON (1969): 'Settler and native in the urban centres of Roman Africa', 145 n. 1.

<sup>170</sup> Mentioned on p. 30 above.



and pre-Roman influences. The clearest instance mentioned in Chapter 4, and illustrated in Figure 4.1, was that of Mania Secunda, whose tombstone was engraved with a typical Latin epitaph of reasonable sophistication in the lettering, while her portrait was undoubtedly Neo-Punic in style and execution.<sup>171</sup> In the discussion of the marital ideal as it was represented in Roman Africa, Figure 6.6 showed husband and wife facing each other in a funerary relief executed in the Roman style.



FIGURE 7.34 STELE AT HR BRERRITA



FIGURE 7.33 HUSBAND AND WIFE  
FROM THAMUGADI

executed in the Roman style.

While the woman is given a Roman appearance (her hairstyle dates the sculpture to the Julio-Claudian period, and she is also depicted with a classical round faced Roman

profile of the ideal type described above)<sup>172</sup> the man opposite her is possibly of Punic or Libyan origin.<sup>173</sup> Intermarriage between Roman, Punic and African elements must have occurred, and we have another clear instance of this in Figure 7.2 illustrated earlier in this Chapter, where C. Iulius Serenus is of 'unmistakable black-white extraction' (Snowden 1983: 92), while this is less evident in the case of his wife. The expensive mosaic depicts individuals of some financial prosperity, but nothing further is known about either of them.<sup>174</sup> Different cultural influences on husbands and wives can also be seen in the accompanying illustration (Figure 7.33), an *ex voto* of husband and wife. The inscription is in Latin, and the woman wears a hairstyle popular during the reign of Trajan (Wimmer 1963: 68). Her husband, however, bears more of a resemblance to the Punic priests shown in Figure 7.4 regarding his hairstyle and beard than to the Roman tradition. In the case of the drawing of the sarcophagus relief (Figure 7.31), the woman by her dress and activity of carrying an item on her head and a jug in her hand is a less significant figure than the two men, and not displayed in a Romanized manner, even though the

<sup>171</sup> See p. 62.

<sup>172</sup> See p. 96.

<sup>173</sup> LASSÈRE describes his profile: 'au nez busqué et au crâne renflé, dans la partie occipitale' (1977: comment on the cover illustration, title page). CHRISTIDES (2000): *Byzantine Libya*, 7, points out that the funeral busts and stelae from rural Cyrenaica of the Graeco-Roman period are not evidence of non-natives, since the display typical Libyan facial features: 'The extensive sedentarization of Libyan tribesmen during the Roman and Byzantine periods, and their mixture with the Graeco-Romans, created a mixed race'.

<sup>174</sup> SNOWDEN (1983): *Before color prejudice. The ancient view of blacks*, 92, also feels that the career of Iulius Serenus may have been similar to that of the peasant from Mactaris who 'made good' [CIL 11824]. But judging by the ages of the individuals depicted here, 41 and 48 respectively, it is also possible that Serenus elevated himself by marrying a wealthy widow. See below p. 135 (illustration) and p. 182 (discussion) for discussion on this aspect.



relief itself shows clear Roman influence in its style of execution. The rider is Romanized, and even the shod herdsman is depicted as more Romanized than the woman, although his herd of sheep/goats are probably intended to reflect his local wealth measured in African terms.

Another example of multicultural influence has been illustrated in Figure 7.34, a stele found at Hr Brerrita and dated to the 3<sup>rd</sup> century AD [*CIL* 793; *ILT* 680]. The Latin inscription is followed by a translation in Neo-Punic, and the family - Gadeus, son of Felix, Secunda, daughter of Secundus, and two sons, Saturius and Gadeus - is clearly of local origin. In the relief Secunda on the left wears a *palla* and *stola*, while her husband, Gadeus, is dressed in a *toga*.<sup>175</sup> The portraits below, on the other hand, show more influence of the Neo-Punic style in the way in which the folds of their clothes is depicted.

From Late Antiquity we have the case of Aelia Arisuth, an example of various cultural influences evident in both her names and her image. 'Aelia', as mentioned above, is an indication of Romanization of her ancestors, while 'Arisuth' is Punic/Semitic.<sup>176</sup> In Figure 7.25 she wears the Dalmatian tunic also illustrated in the candle bearers to either side of her portrait, which was common apparel for her time also outside Africa. But the collar necklace bears similarities to Afro-Punic traditions of pre-Roman times, and the turban is also not traditionally encountered in Rome or Constantinople. In appearance the layered cape around her shoulders (also demonstrated in Figure 7.22) is very similar to that around the shoulders of the statuette from Carthage (Figure 7.3), described by Charles-Picard as a 'sort of shawl'.

It is not particularly surprising that the evidence of non-Roman influences is less than that showing influence from Rome. The inscriptions and images collected in Chapters 4 to 7 for Romanized women are in fact an indication of the extent to which the conservative ideals of the élite at Rome were adopted by the provincial élite in Africa. By depicting their wives, mother and daughters in a certain way, they indicated their membership of a normative 'club', indicated that they were 'Roman', and of a certain recognized status. To what extent the harmonious marriages were truly as idyllic, or the matrons truly as virtuous, as described in epitaphs and literature is impossible to determine. The epitaphs serve mainly to remind us that for the élite classes in Roman Africa, and for those of humbler status who aspired to their style, the expression of a Roman ideal identified them with their origins and status.

Some of the evidence collected above also shows that the African, Punic and Roman cultures shared some of the traditional ideal virtues for women. Fidelity, fertility and industry in domestic tasks like spinning and weaving were virtues for African, Punic and Graeco-Roman wives. What makes the Roman portrayal of these virtues particularly Roman is their Latin context (a Roman-style tombstone, or the use of the Latin language), indicating at the very least the desire to appear Roman and to see these virtues as Roman virtues.

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<sup>175</sup> Saturius and Gadeus erected the tombstone for their *patri piissimo* (and not *parentibus piissimis*). It is possible of course that Secunda was not their mother.

<sup>176</sup> See p. 74 n. 74.



## CONCLUSION TO MALE HONOUR AND FEMALE PURITY

Depicting women through identifiably Roman virtues seems to have been the norm among the municipal African élite. Men to a certain extent gained reflected honour from their virtuous wives in the Roman tradition, and women in turn also made concerted attempts to appear Romanized even when they were clearly, to judge by their names, of local origin, for reasons of status. Romanization distinguished the Roman African élite not from their peers so much as from the barbarian hordes outside the recognized power structure of the African cities and provinces. Sallust spoke disdainfully of the Mauri who practised polygamy, in which no one wife had the status accorded to a single partner.

*Ita animus multitudine distrahitur; nulla pro socia optinet, pariter omnes viles sunt.*

Thus the affection of a husband is divided among a multitude; no one of them becomes a companion to him, but

all are equally neglected

[*Bell. Jug.* 80.6-7.]

Even in the 6<sup>th</sup> century Procopius tells us that when the general Solomon threatened the Libyans with the lives of the hostages he had taken, they simply replied that the capture of their women might be a concern if the situation were reversed, since the Romans could take only one wife, but they themselves, who could take fifty wives, were not apprehensive about lacking descendants [*De Bell. Vand.* 4.13]. While modern scholars view political marriages as demeaning to the women who were merely pawns, Sallust mentions that among the Mauri political marriages were impractical since every man could have as many wives as he could afford. The Roman author clearly felt that monogamous political marriages granted women a position of dignity.

To conclude with a single example, the ornate mausoleum built by Marius Saturninus for his wife at Henchir Zid (in the Guert Plain) plainly awarded her the status that any woman of her level would have desired:<sup>177</sup>

[GSELL, ATL. ARCH F.39 (CHERIA) NR. 90]

D(IS) M(ANIBUS) [S(ACRUM)] | FABRICIA SILVANA [VIXIT AN]NIS L [C]ONIUGI | DIGNISSIMAE F[ECIT] MARIUS SATURNINUS | MARITUS, ADVIV[U]S MONUMENTUM INSTRUXIT | ID[E]M QUE DEDICAVIT EX S(ESTERTIUS) XII (MILLIBUS) N(UMMUM)

Consecrated to the souls of the departed. Fabricia Silvana lived 50 years. Marius Saturninus made this for his dignified wife, and left instructions for its upkeep from the sum of 12 000 sesterces.

The status of the family and of Fabricia Silvana are indicated by the grandeur of the tomb as well as by the one adjective describing her: *dignissima*. *Dignitas* when used of a man was a word which conveyed more than respectability, it connoted an 'aristocratic ideal of glory' (Veyne 1987: 101). As a woman it certainly placed her in complete contradistinction to the barbarian attitude to women identified by Sallust. In the context of Roman Africa then, the display of the *matrona* in her modesty, her virtues as a wife and mother and her wealth and standing in society accorded status both to her and her family.

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<sup>177</sup> Discussed by LESCHI (1957): *Études d'épigraphie, d'archéologie et d'histoire africaines*, 296-301. Compare also *AE* 1985, 850, where a non-Roman wife erects a tomb of HS 25 000 and a Latin inscription to her deceased husband who recently became a Roman citizen.





## CHAPTER 8

# HEALTH AND AGE ISSUES FOR ROMAN AFRICAN WOMEN

In antiquity it is generally accepted that women had a lower median expectation of life than men, but that their expectations were higher if they survived the critical years of childbirth (Dixon 1988: 30 and references). But demographical studies are fraught with difficulty due to the usual problems, such as statistical evidence based on the small proportion of remaining epigraphical evidence. The young age of wives at death may also only be an indication that their husbands (or parents) were still alive and able to commemorate their wives (or daughters), since women are most often commemorated by these individuals (Hopkins 1965b: 128). Older women may have remained uncommemorated, particularly among the propertied classes where there were often large age differences between husband and wife (as for example the twenty year difference between Augustine and his affianced Roman bride). Thus the information is often skewed and the conclusions tentative. Nevertheless some interesting inferences may be drawn from our Roman African evidence.

### “NEVER TRUST A WOMAN WHO TELLS HER REAL AGE”<sup>1</sup>

#### General attitudes to age information in Roman Africa

Rousselle (1992: 298) claims that gravestones commemorating elderly women are rare in Roman Africa, although in fact the opposite proves to be the case according to systematic demographical studies such as those done by Lassère (1977) and Scheidel (1996b). But can these figures be trusted, do women ‘tell’ us their real age on inscriptions? In many instances the ages given for both men and women are sometimes inordinately high. At Sila an inscription attests to one woman who reached the age of 103 and another, possibly her sister, the age of 111:

TEMDA

[CIL 20109 = 19204]

D(IS) M(ANIBUS) S(ACRUM) | SITTIA HE|LENA  
SPLEN|DIDISSIMAE | ME|MORIAE MATER | V(IXIT)

D(IS) M(ANIBUS) S(ACRUM) | C(AIUS) IULIUS C(AII)  
FIL(IUS) QUIR(INATRIBUS) | BARBARUS V(IXIT)  
A(NNOS) LXXXV | H(IC) S(ITA) E(ST) O(SSA) E(I)

<sup>1</sup> A quip from the many made by Oscar Wilde: ‘One should never trust a woman who tells one her real age. A woman who would tell one that, would tell one anything’ [*A Woman of No Importance*, Act I].



A(NNIS) CIII H(IC) | S(ITA) O(SSA)  
B(ENE) Q(UIESCANT)

B(ENE) Q(UIESCANT) | ENNIUS CELLINIANUS |  
SITTIA FORTUNULA | P(IA) FILIA QUIR(INA TRIBUS)  
V(IXIT) A(NNOS) CXI | H(IC) S(ITA) E(ST) O(SSA)  
T(IBI) B(ENE) Q(UIESCANT).

Consecrated to the souls of the departed. Sittia Helena, mother of the most splendid memory, lived 103 years.  
Here she (lies), may her bones rest in peace

Consecrated to the souls of the departed. Gaius Iulius Barbarus, son of Gaius of the tribe Quirina lived 85 years.  
Here he lies, may his bones rest in peace. Ennius Cellinianus (erected this?). Sittia Fortunula, pious daughter, of the Quirina tribe, lived 111 years, here she rests, may your bones rest in peace.

At Cirta a number of inscriptions testify to advanced old age for both men and women: M. Julius Abaeus reached the age of 131, and the veteran Julius Gracililius and one Julius Pacatus both 120 years of age, while Julia Gaetula holds the women's record at Cirta for 125 years. A handful of examples could be anomalies, but in Roman Africa for the period 146 BC to AD 235, Lassère (1977: 473) counts 379 such centenarians, an unusually high number, clearly beyond the bounds of possibility: an inscription from Thala [CIL 541] reports one woman having reached 155 years, while an astonishing 195 years is given for another woman at Djem Chettaba (Lassère 1977: 472 n.28). These given ages contrast rather dramatically not only with realistic observations of later periods including our own, but also with contemporary statistics from Rome itself, where the oldest recorded age for a woman in inscriptions is only 85 (Matheson 2000: 125).<sup>2</sup>

#### Possible explanations:

A number of explanations and theories have been offered in an attempt to solve this anomaly. Lassère (1977: 473) and Duncan-Jones (1980) both point to the custom of age-rounding in antiquity, particularly to the nearest 5, although in most of the Roman Africa cases this does not make a substantial difference to their abnormally inflated value. The confusion of C for L has also been suggested (Lassère 1977: 473 n. 42), but does not meet all the anomalies. In the inscription quoted above, Gaius Iulius Barbarus is clearly LXXXV and Sittia Fortunula is CXI - confusion within the context of one tombstone seems unlikely, and confusion seems even less likely in the case of the woman from Thala who died at the age of CLV. The explanation that C could also stand for *circiter* is adopted by Lassère as presenting the lowest number of anomalies, at least in the case of men (Lassère 1977: 472). It still leaves many anomalies in the case of women, for example, it would make Sittia Helena mentioned above a mother at the age of three!

The incident of Pudentilla's age in the *Apologia* would, however, suggest a rather careless perception of age accuracy in Roman African antiquity. The prosecution gives the widow's age as sixty, while Apuleius proves by documentation that she is just over forty. Surely this is rather a large margin of error, yet one presumes that the former age of 60 must have had some credibility with the audience, since Apuleius goes to some trouble to refute it.<sup>3</sup> Age figures on tombstones in a less educated environment may have been skewed even more. It

<sup>2</sup> Pliny, however, cites a number of examples from Rome where some of the women he names reached ages of 97, 99, 103, 115, 100 and 104 [NH 7.48/156-158, 162-164]. Compare also the age figures of widows obtained from the Egyptian census returns by HANSON (2000): 'Widows too young in their widowhood'.

<sup>3</sup> The latter age is proved by the birth certificate [Apol. 89.4-5], although we may perhaps guess that Pudentilla is closer to forty-five than forty-one, since Apuleius, who would like to diminish the age difference between his wife and himself for his own purposes, never mentions the precise age (*Haud multo amplius quadragensimum*), exactly for this reason. Apuleius would prefer to create the impression that Pudentilla is still in her childbearing years and hence did not marry him for reasons which might seem nefarious in Roman eyes.



would appear more likely that accuracy in giving the age of the deceased was not particularly important. If the veracity of the age was not really at issue birth records such as the one referred to by Apuleius [*Apol.* 89.2] were probably not consulted when the age of the deceased was inscribed on his or her tombstone, and it is possible that births were in any case only registered for the urbanized element of the population, if not only for the élite.<sup>4</sup> It is the particular connotations attached to advanced age which are being advertized here, another case, in fact, of façade management. It may very well be the case that, while ageing held clear disadvantages, it had some advantages, too.

Shaw has concluded from a large-scale epigraphic study of the Roman empire<sup>5</sup> that the aged were valued more highly in the smaller towns of Roman Africa (where indigenous influences were stronger) than in the big centres like Carthage. Conversely, 'those who placed great public value in death on children were all from the larger urban centres or from Christian backgrounds' (1991a: 73). Shaw notes that Roman Africa showed the most extreme results compared to all the other provinces in the great social value they placed on the aged in commemoration, while 'consistently producing some of the lowest rates of commemoration of the young in the whole empire' (1991a: 78). Shaw attributes this to the fact that the rural areas and smaller towns in Roman Africa were dominated by forms of family organization which differed from that of the traditional Roman family pattern, where the authority of the agnatic line was gradually being eroded by the power of the cognate family (1991a: 69-70). In the African tradition the 'vertical lineages' found in tribal groups influenced the valuation of individuals, emphasizing the seniors at the expense of the younger members, such as infants and children.<sup>6</sup> We may therefore see Shaw's argument of the local importance and status given to age as the basis for the fact that age given on tombstones may not necessarily be an accurate reflection, but rather presented an opportunity for the commemorators to grant increased status to a deceased individual.

### **The advantages and disadvantages of ageing for women of Roman Africa**

Two of the aspects which made a woman marriageable - beauty and fertility - inevitably disappeared with age. Others, such as wealth and family status, were more subject to changing conditions and could even improve. Pudentilla at her second marriage was no longer a virgin, beautiful or of childbearing age, aspects which made her a less attractive bargain for marriage [*Apol.* 73.4; 92.5-11]. Apuleius' description of his wife as a 'woman of plain appearance and the mother of children' (*mediocri facie mater liberorum*) [*Apol.* 73.4] is less than flattering, but in this instance he avoids responsibility for the assessment by attributing it to Pontianus. He returns to this point again, since under these conditions it should be quite normal for widows to offer large dowries to attract suitors:

*Quamquam quis omnium vel exigue rerum peritus culpae auderet, si mulier vidua et mediocri forma, at non aetate mediocri, nubere volens longa dote et molli condicione invitasset iuvenem neque corpore neque animo neque fortuna paenitendum?*

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In ancient medicine a woman was held to be fertile until up to between forty and fifty years of age.

<sup>4</sup> For the practice of registering births see the studies based on Egyptian papyri by SCHULTZ (1942/43): 'Roman registers of births and birth certificates'.

<sup>5</sup> SHAW (1991a): 'The cultural meaning of death: age and gender in the Roman family'. The results of this study were also used in the discussion on childhood in Roman Africa in Chapter 4.

<sup>6</sup> On tribal family structures see also SHAW (1982c): 'The elders of Christian Africa' and also (1991c): 'The structure of local society in the early Maghrib: the elders'.



Who, who had the least experience of life would dare to pass any censure if a widow of inconsiderable looks and a considerable age, who wanted marriage, had by the offer of a large dowry and easy conditions invited a young man, who was no bad match as regards his figure, character or wealth, to become her husband? [Apol. 92.7-11]

Apuleius never mentions that Pudentilla is past the age of bearing children, but at forty plus it is unlikely that she would have been able to bear many more, if at all. Impossible to tell, of course, whether Pudentilla would in fact have wished to bear more children. An ancient Libyan tradition tells of special wells, especially popular among widows and divorced women, which rendered the bather more beautiful (Bates 1970: 172), and it is quite likely that this ritual also served as a fertility rite. Decret and Fantar (1981: 245-247) refer to many ancient and modern North African rituals where immersion in water was intended to make a woman more fertile. The evidence discussed in Chapter 3 supports the idea that in the native African tradition fertility was of crucial importance, more so than maintaining a façade of virginity or modesty. Traditionally among the Roman aristocracy fertility would have been of less importance, if we can judge by the laws of Augustus regarding marriage, remarriage and bearing children, which seem to indicate a certain disaffection among this class in this respect. It is debatable, however, to what extent these Roman views penetrated to the Roman élite in Africa. The paucity of evidence for large numbers of children among the commemorative status group discussed in Chapter 6 would support the idea that to some extent these views were in fact shared by Roman Africans of a certain status.

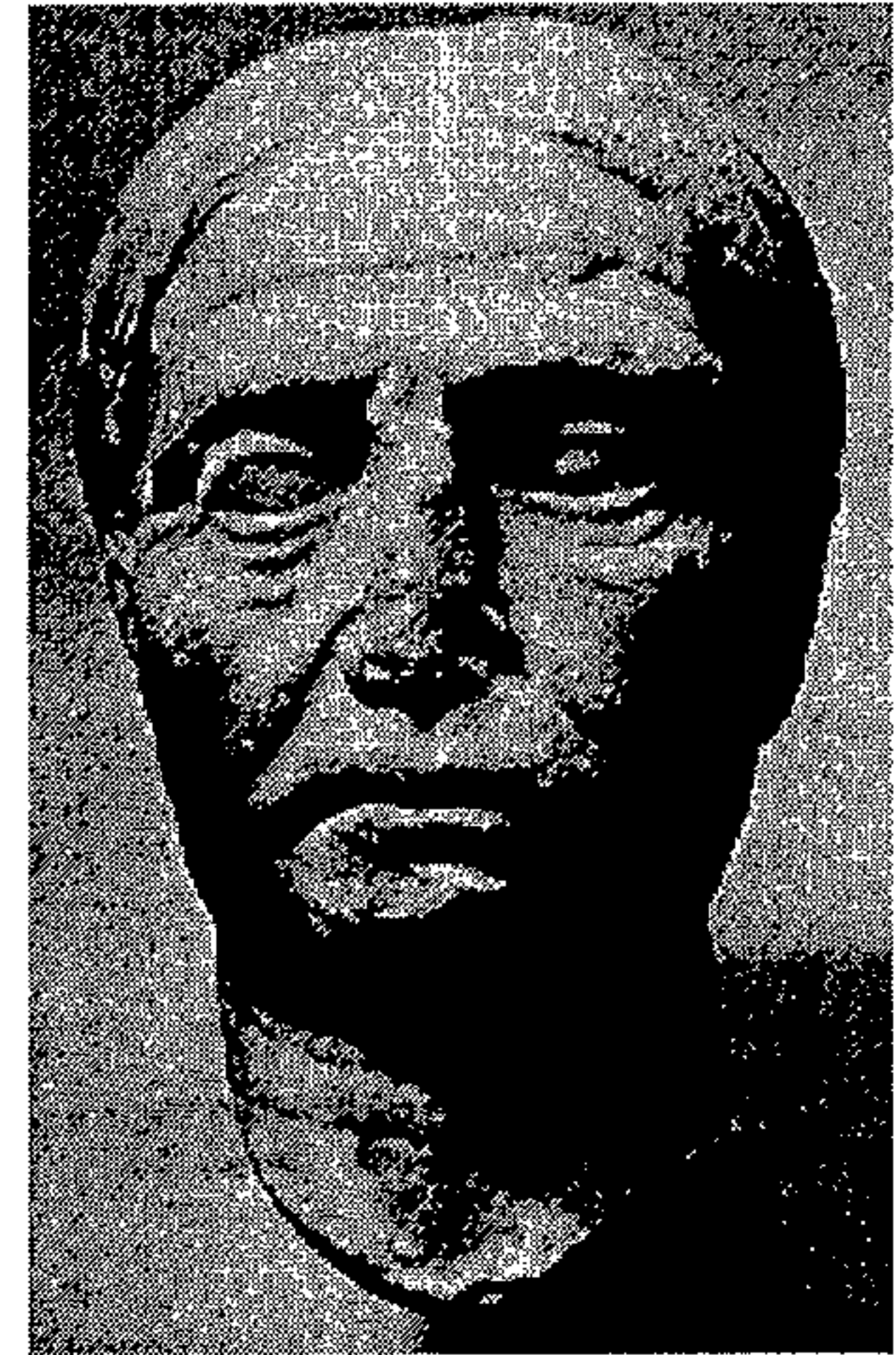


FIGURE 8.1 PORTRAIT OF AN ELDERLY LADY FROM PTOLEMAIS



FIGURE 8.2 ELDERLY MATRON FROM SABRATHA

But aside from whether Pudentilla and widows like her were past the age or even wanted to have more children, in the extract quoted above Apuleius states with admirable directness (and certainly no false modesty regarding himself) that older women were at least in the physical sense a less attractive bargain. Roman portraiture was often merciless when it adopted the so-called veristic style, and the sagging flesh, deep folds and bags under the eyes are unmistakable signs of age in the accompanying examples from Ptolemais (Figure 8.1) and Sabratha (Figure 8.2). Many of our portraits of Roman women are of course funerary, and possibly the only portrait ever made of that individual.<sup>7</sup> Portraits of old people emphasized the long and presumably virtuous life lived by the deceased, while from a purely practical point of view it was desirable that an individual be recognizable to passers by, in which case too much unblemished perfection would defeat purpose of setting up the funerary portrait in the first place (Matheson 2000: 135). Nevertheless a measure of idealization in portraiture, especially when it was in the artist's interest to flatter his subject, is not unknown from Roman antiquity.<sup>8</sup> Imperial portraits are

<sup>7</sup> The realism of such portraits is sometimes attributed to the fact that they may have been made from death masks (Hopkins 1983a: 217). See also Figure 7.5 for a portrait of a young girl probably made from such a mask.

<sup>8</sup> A famous example is the statue of Augustus found at Prima porta, which hardly reflects the sixty year old man Augustus was at the time



a case in point, reflecting imperial policies and values during the lifetime of the subjects - for imperial women this meant depicting them in their childbearing years - or deification after their death (Matheson 2000: 134). In portraits of less famous individuals it is of course normally impossible to tell whether there is any idealization since we usually do not know the age at which the portrait was made, but a similar tradition of ideal youthfulness is found in the Fayum paintings of neighbouring Egypt, which also show no old people.<sup>9</sup> In the same style of execution the tomb fresco of Aelia Arisuth at Gargàresch (Figure 7.25) hardly reflects the face of a sixty year old woman, the age attested by the accompanying inscription. While we will probably never know the reason for this particular style's idealization, vanity is not excluded from our knowledge of Roman African women. Tertullian rails against women who tried to dye their grey hair black again to recapture lost youth:

*Erubescit aetas exoptata votis: furtum conficitur. Adulescentia in qua delinquimus suspiratur; occasio gravitas interpolatur.*

Trying to keep a secret that you have reached that age for which you longed and prayed, sighing for youth which was a time of sin, missing the chance to show some true maturity! [De Cult. Fem. 2.6.3]

There must have been differing reactions among women on the issue of ageing, since while a woman past childbearing age was devalued by society, paradoxically some women emerge as more powerful with increased status and authority when they reached an advanced age. In addition, women who survived childbirth often outlived their older husbands, and in the propertied status group a mother's position could be greatly enhanced by widowhood, since this usually meant that she was freed from legal and moral obligations and commanded her own property.<sup>10</sup> The authority of Monica, who as his widowed mother was able to arrange the marriage of Augustine, is an indication of this autonomy. But Dixon (1988: 6) also emphasizes that widowhood was not always synonymous with power, and that many widows were left destitute on the deaths of their husbands, something which becomes more apparent under the increasing dominance of the Christian Church, which publicized its patronage over widows and the poor and destitute. The Christian Church also influenced the lives of widows in another respect. Thurston assumes that older women in antiquity had greater freedom of movement since their age was thought to be protection against assault (1989: 11). This was the reason why widows in particular were called upon to perform certain tasks in the Christian

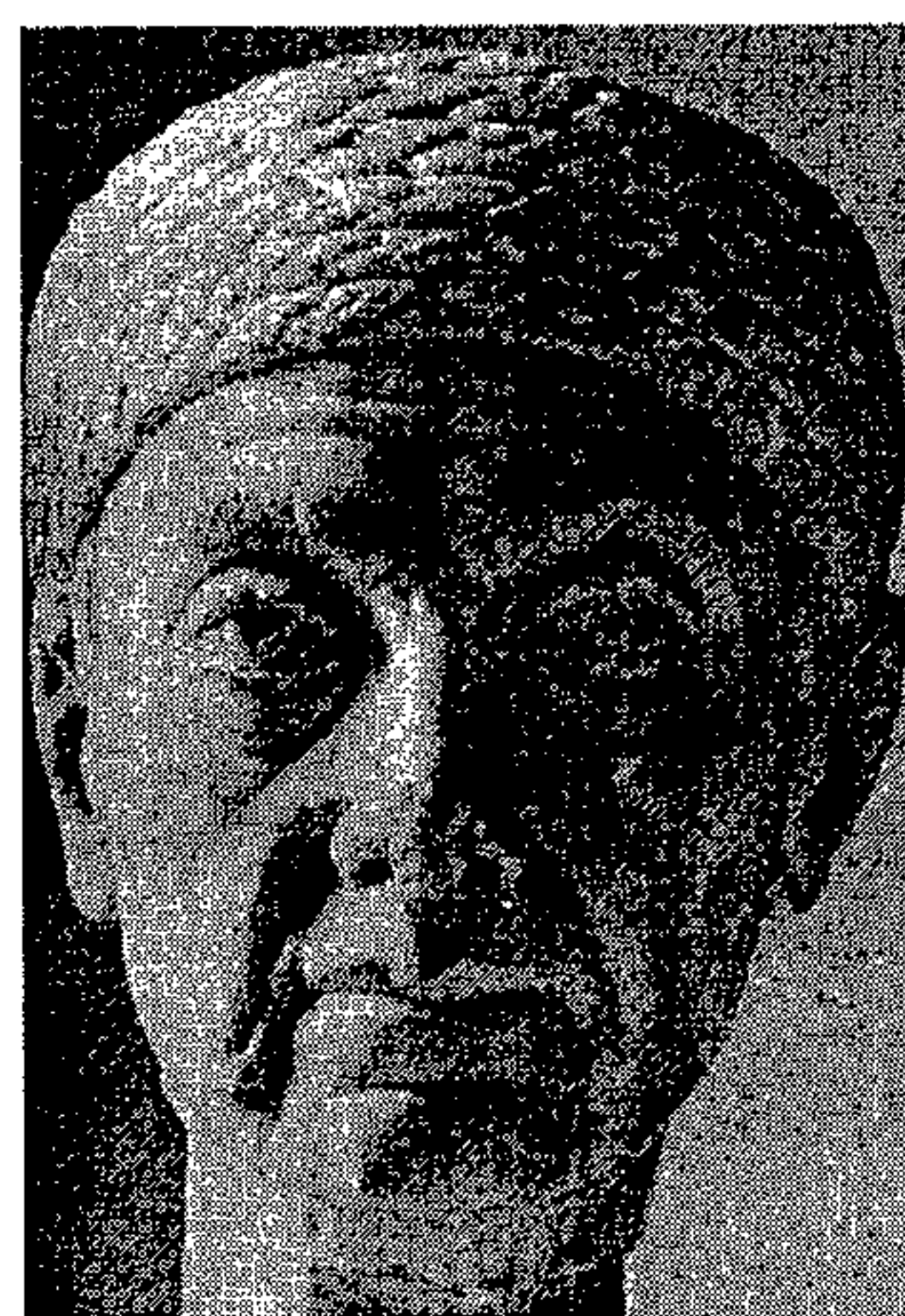


FIGURE 8.3 HEAD OF AN OLD WOMAN  
FROM LEPCIS MAGNA

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of its creation.

<sup>9</sup> There appears to be no specific reason why the Fayum portraits are so idealized. For their general appearance and distribution across the Roman world, see BANDINELLI (1971): *Rome: the Late Empire*, 282-291.

<sup>10</sup> DIXON'S study of Roman women (*The Roman mother*, 1988) argues the benefits of testamentary power by women (which is discussed in more detail in Chapter 10 below): 'that the expectation of *pietas* to parents was linked to the control of property by the older generation in Rome. The fact that the mother could hold property and had the power to transmit it conferred on her a position of authority within the family which she held for life' (1988: 5). Several Roman authors refer to legacy hunters in terms of great cynicism (see Champlin 1991: 87-102). Those who were childless, men and women, were especially targeted [Tac., *Germ.* 20.5; *Hist.* 1.73; *Ann.* 3.25.2; 13.52.2]. Wealth certainly gave women greater power, the subject of sarcastic asides by authors such as Martial and Juvenal, who of course are not inclined to dwell on the beneficial aspects of any situation.



community.<sup>11</sup> The power and authority of older women was therefore dependent in part on their own character, in part on the force of custom and in part on wealth and their control of their children's inheritance.

The portrait in Figure 8.3 above is entitled facetiously 'the mother-in-law' by the modern authors (Bandinelli 1966, Figure 164), an individual who has in fact been a stock figure since antiquity. Doubtlessly the stern expression was meant to convey the self-possession, dignity and authority of the *materfamilias* or of a priestess, the latter indicated by her priestess-like hairstyle.<sup>12</sup> The austere moral character with which older women were ideally associated is likely to be one of the reasons why we have a number of portraits of elderly women in Roman antiquity. Great age carried with it a certain authority and exclusivity - aside from the dubious veracity of the advanced ages advertised on tombstones as indicated above, only a relatively small percentage of women are indicated as having survived to an advanced age. Matheson (2000: 130) also notes that the depiction of an older woman could possibly be connected to her role outside the family which demanded maturity, for example as a priestess, particularly in the cult of Ceres. This would also explain the greatly exaggerated age of many priestesses in inscriptions.<sup>13</sup> In fact, where age is indicated only five out of a total of forty-five can be found who died before the age of sixty, and more than half died after reaching eighty years of age.

Dixon claims that in Roman society prestige often accumulated with age (1988: 31), although of course age by itself did not necessarily empower women. Among the poor and disadvantaged it could in fact be a great handicap, as one can see from Scheidel's examples of such women working as rural labour (1996a: 6-7).<sup>14</sup> Shaw's study (1991a) mentioned above<sup>15</sup> indicates that in Roman Africa the statistics show that women of rural (and less Romanized) areas were given the lowest social valuation when compared to men of the same group, and that this differential in valuation is greater than anywhere else in the Roman Empire. Women in the urban context were statistically given a much greater valuation, as the evidence collected here has shown. In addition Shaw (1991a: 85) detects that the inscriptions which show a preference for males in rural areas actually show an increase in this phenomenon over time, which is also reflected in the literary evidence, for example by the 'peculiarly harsh paternal relationships' which characterize the Roman African family of Augustine in the 4<sup>th</sup> century (Shaw 1991a: 85). In this case, then, Christianity does not seem to have had an ameliorating effect on the valuation for women that it did on the valuation for children as discussed in Chapter 4.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> More on this subject in Chapters 12 and 13.

<sup>12</sup> MATHESON (2000): 'The elder Claudia: older women in Roman art', 128, notes that while there were certain hairstyles suitable for young girls, there was no corresponding coiffure for older women who often followed the fashions of the day. The similarity of this hairstyle to the turban-like arrangement of the *vittae* or the *infula* which we see in the portraits of the Vestals from the Roman Forum has already been commented upon in Chapter 7, and D'AMBRA (2000): 'Nudity and adornment in female portrait sculpture', 109, surmises that such a hairstyle may have been specifically designed to imitate the hair arrangements of priestesses.

<sup>13</sup> Priestesses: [CIL 7604 = ILAlg II 834: 115 years], [CIL 5149: 103 years], [CIL 14437: 103 years], [CIL 19136: 101 years], [CIL 20203: 101 years], [ILA 199: 100+ years], [AE 1951, 55: 97 years], [CIL 5938: 97 years], [CIL 25503: 95 years], [CIL 3307: 95 years], [ILAlg II, 72: 95 years], [CIL 26237: 95 years], [CIL 26447a: 91 years], [CIL 11826: 90 years], [CIL 5937: 90 years] and [ILAlg I, 2218: 90 years]. See also Tables II, IIIA and B and IV in Chapter 12.

<sup>14</sup> Discussed in the following chapter on professions for women.

<sup>15</sup> See above p. 57.

<sup>16</sup> See above p. 58.



### Age and what is suitable

Venerable and authoritative roles constituted socially expected behaviour for older people of élite status across Greek, Roman and Byzantine traditions. Conversely, it was also an age when social convention prohibited certain actions, which had been unexceptional or even expected at earlier times in their lives.<sup>17</sup> The appropriate venerable role for an elderly *matrona* was that of a chaste priestess. The most often cited inappropriate activity for older women is anything related to sexuality. Writing in the 6<sup>th</sup> century Procopius cannot contain his disdain that Belisarius should still have fondness for his wife, Antonina:

καταστάς ἐκτόπως εἰς αὐτὴν ἐρωτόληπτος καὶ ταῦτα ἐξήκοντα ἤδη γεγονυῖαν ἔτη.

...being extraordinarily smitten with love of her, though she was already sixty years of age. [Anek. 4.42].

For men who had legitimate adult heirs such activity was thought excessive, and likewise for women who could no longer conceive (Nathan 2000: 36). We may imagine that Procopius' disapproval also reflects the attitude of his contemporaries, the Byzantine administrators and their wives who came to Africa in the period following the wars Procopius describes, but this attitude could be said to hold for most of antiquity from some of its earliest records. Already around Solon's time it was thought irregular for an older woman to marry a younger man because she could only have been doing so for sexual reasons, which was inappropriate to her age.<sup>18</sup> The situation was compounded by the fact that such women were often wealthy, in which Roman African society's disapprobation is echoed by Corippus<sup>19</sup> where he relates that wealthy (and implicitly older) widows were now the targets for marriage, while maidens were left on the shelf [Ioh. 3.369-375]. The poems of Luxorius paint sexual activity for older women in the most lurid terms:

#### In vetulam virginem nubentem

Virgo, quam Phlegethon vocat sororem,  
Saturni potior parens senecta,  
Quam Nox atque Erebus tulit Chaosque,  
Cui rugae totidem graves quote anni  
Cui vultus elephans dedit cutemque,  
Mater simia quam creavit arvis  
Grandaeva in Libycis novo sub orbe,

Olim quae decuit marita Diti  
Pro nata Cereris dari per umbras -  
Quis te tam petulans suburit ardor,  
Nunc cum iam exitium tibi supersit?  
An hoc pro titulo cupis sepulcri,  
Ut te cognita fama sic loquatur,  
Quod stuprata viro est anus nocenti?

#### To an aged virgin who is getting married

Virgin, whom Phlegethon calls his sister, you who are probably old enough to be the mother of Saturn, you whom Night and Erebus and Chaos brought into the world, you whose deep wrinkles are as numerous as your years, you to whom an elephant gave his looks and his hide, you whose mother was an aged ape that gave birth to you in Africa when the world was young, you who long ago could fittingly have been given instead of Ceres' daughter to Pluto as his bride among the dead, with what impetuous passion do you now burn when you are on the point of death? Can the reason be that you crave the following epitaph so that widespread report will speak of you thus:

'Old lady raped by a sex criminal'?

[Epigr. 15]

In another instance the thrice-widowed Paula who has married her fourth husband [Epigr. 23] is also characterised by her wrinkles (*Rugosa...anus*). But Luxorius is equally critical of old men who attempt to keep up with younger men when it comes to sexual relations, since it is in the nature of his genre to gibe at those who pretend to be what they are not<sup>20</sup> As in the case of Roman satire, however, older women provoke the most

<sup>17</sup> See for example Ovid, *Ars Amat.* 3.1.27-30; Cicero, *De Senec.* 33; Juvenal, *Sat.* 8.163-170.

<sup>18</sup> Plutarch speaks of 'unions which age forbids and love does not invite' (οὐδὲ περιττέον ἄφρους καὶ ἀχαρίτους ἐπιπλοκάς) [Sol. 20.5].

<sup>19</sup> The text by Corippus is quoted in full on p. 97.

<sup>20</sup> Epigram 57, for example, is entitled *In eum, qui, cum senior dici nollet, multas sibi concubas faciebat* ('Against a man who, because he did not wish to be called an old man, kept many mistresses for himself').



intense expression of fear and disgust (Richlin 1983: 112-113).<sup>21</sup>

Besides the already often cited example of Pudentilla and Apuleius, there are other instances where it appears that older women married men younger than themselves. In the case of C. Iulius Serenus and Numitoria Saturnina (illustrated in Figure 7.2) the age of the latter is seven years greater than that of her husband - the mosaic includes an inscription giving their ages as 41 and 48 respectively. It is possible that Numitoria Saturnina survived her husband by seven years or more, and that the mosaic was made after her (later) death, but there is no other evidence to support this, and we know of no other examples of such cases from antiquity. A similar case of age difference at the tomb at Gargàresch has some archaeological support. Again if we follow the inscriptions it appears that Aelia Arisuth was older than her husband, Aelius Magnus/Maximus. Aelia Arisuth was approximately sixty, *sexaginta* | *plus minus*. The inscription for Aelius Magnus/Maximus is damaged and the age is conjectural:

[CIL 22688; AE 1904, 19]  
[D(IS) M(ANIBUS) S(ACRUM) / AELIOS MA[GNUS or-XIMUS] IURATHANI (FILIUS) / BIX[IT] AN[N]O[S QUINQU- or  
QUADR-]AGIN[TA] QUIN[QUE] / PLUS M[ ]N[US].  
Consecrated to the souls of the departed. Aelius Magnus/Maximus, son of Iurathanus, lived approximately forty-  
five/fifty-five years.

Both Romanelli (1922: 409) and Aurigemma (1960: 97) support the suggestion of 45 or 55 for Aelius. In addition archaeologists have assessed the paintwork of the larger niche of Aelia Arisuth as older (Romanelli 1922: 409), and it would seem therefore that Aelius was buried after Aelia, which would make the age gap with his wife even greater than the 5 or 15 years that separate them according to the inscriptions. Romanelli (1922: 414) concludes: 'Il marito era dunque ancora più giovane d'anni quando seguì la moglie nel sepolcro'.

Instances of older women marrying younger men are from the propertied status groups in Roman Africa. We have no evidence of this practice from lower status groups here, but this is scarcely surprising as this group has left limited evidence of their existence. In the case of Pudentilla, Aelia and Numitoria the women appear to have had some status (in terms of their wealth or the importance which they are given in art) and it is quite possible that they were examples of the situations on which writers like Luxorius and Corippus pour their vituperative criticism.

## WOMEN AND HEALTH IN THE ROMAN AFRICAN CONTEXT

While we can safely discount ages over 100 given on some tombstones, some argument can be made for achieving old age in Roman North Africa, particularly in non-urbanized areas, as a table of comparative longevity in Lassère (1977: 541) indicates.<sup>22</sup> Herodotus comments that the indigenous people of Africa are said to be the healthiest in the world [4.187] and Sallust 400 years later that the native African peoples are so healthy that they seldom die of disease (*nam morbus haud saepe quemquam superat*) [Bell. Iug. 17.6]. But some parts of Africa were clearly healthier than others. An inscription from Carthage [CIL 24986], in which a mother and daughter died, bears witness to the many plagues<sup>23</sup> which beset Africa; and Cyprian too [Ep. 18.1.2] comments

<sup>21</sup> Martial captures one aspect of male sentiment about marrying older wealthy women when he says that he is not interested in marrying a rich wife lest she be a husband to him [Epigr. 8.12].

<sup>22</sup> The table lists Rome, a number of cities in Gaul, Britain and Spain, but Africa has the highest average for both men and women.

<sup>23</sup> Victor of Vita [3.57] mentions famine and disease during the Vandal period, and his testimony is supported by archaeological



on the fact that Carthage in summer subjected its inhabitants to all sorts of pestilence. Another inscription further inland at Auzia in Mauretania Caesariensis finds it worth mentioning that a woman lived for 26 years 'without fever' [CIL 3648] (*piissima cultrix pudicitiae, famae quae vixit sine gebribus annis viginti sex*), a fever which Lassère (1977: 549) interprets as probably malaria.<sup>24</sup> Lassère also tentatively infers plague or malaria from epitaphs where family members died simultaneously. The greater majority of the cases he mentions are of women. That women were possibly more susceptible to fevers and plagues as indicated by the cases Lassère mentions was probably due to their age (some were as young as 3 months) or other possible weaknesses due to for example bearing and giving birth to children (1977: 560-562). The role of the mother or other women in looking after sick children was probably also a contributory factor.

Such health hazards would have made Melania's excuse to leave Hippo Regius (the climate (*aeris morbid*i) of Hippo) not unreasonable [Aug., *Ep.* 126.4]. Contrasting these references it would seem that the African indigenous population, who did not generally live in overcrowded and unhygienic conditions of the urban, Romanized population,<sup>25</sup> were less affected by plagues and other health hazards, something which is still born out in the 6<sup>th</sup> century by Corippus, who tells us that the plague which ravaged the urban areas did not affect the native population [*Ioh.* 3.343-390].

In his study of Christian funerary inscriptions from Altava (Mauretania Caesariensis) and Carthage, Scheidel (1996b) comments on the relatively low increase in mortality for the summer months of these two cities, in particular for the elderly in Altava. He admits to being unable to explain this anomaly, since the tombstones themselves do not give any indication of a group of higher social and economic standing, who would have been able to afford to leave Carthage in the summer months and avoid infections. Nevertheless, Scheidel does not accept the 'time-honoured belief that the large number of tombstone inscriptions of the pre-Christian period can be made to show that the inhabitants of the African province lived longer and therefore dwelt in a healthier environment than the populace in the other parts of the empire' (1996b: 161) since 'Roman tombstone inscriptions do not permit any valid inferences concerning life expectancy, least of all for children and the elderly' (1996b: 161 n.88). But within the limitations of his own evidence Scheidel comes to the conclusion that Carthage in the summer months was a healthier environment than either Rome or Alexandria (1996b: 161).

Apart from the usual health risks of what Scheidel terms 'the struggle for survival that pits humans against viruses and bacteria' (1996b: 8), childbirth held great risks for women of all levels of society. The fear of this very real danger in Roman African context has already been mentioned under the heading of fertility.<sup>26</sup> Women who survived the childbearing years into middle age were not exempt from female ailments, however. Ancient medical writings are generally agreed that women experienced problems somehow related to the uterus at a certain age. According to Hippocratic teaching, old virgins and young widows who were otherwise in good

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evidence (Humphrey 1980: 109-113).

<sup>24</sup> LASSÈRE (1977): *Ubique populus*, 550, notes that, as is today the case, the areas worst hit by malaria were those combining heat with poor drainage. Thus malaria may have been worse in territory where water flow was not controlled and covered.

<sup>25</sup> On this see THOMPSON (1982): 'Development and underdevelopment' and SCOBIE (1986): 'Slums, sanitation and mortality in the Roman world'. Literary references to urban sanitation in Roman Africa are non-existent. In Carthage there appears to be no evidence of *insulae*, which probably means that the city was less overcrowded than other big metropoleis like Alexandria or Rome where such structures intensified occupation per square meter (Scobie 1986: 404 n.44).

<sup>26</sup> See discussion pp. 103; 105-106.



health were inclined to show certain symptoms thought to be the result of the displacement of the uterus - loss of voice, grating the teeth, a high colour - which caused hysteric suffocation.<sup>27</sup> Galen's theory shows some modern advancement in this respect by ascribing the effects of celibacy to a retention of 'female sperm' [*De Loc. Aff.* 6.5-6]. The Hippocratics recommended several unpleasant sounding remedies, such as a pessary of beetles in the uterus, but the best remedy, according to all ancient medical writers, was to fall pregnant [*De Nat. Mul.* 2.127, 8.272-274]. Doctors therefore recommended remarriage, although it appears that in practice, 'hysterical disorders' were normally treated by strictly medical procedures (Hunink 1977: 183). Soranus advised against marriage with women who were too old (or too young, for that matter), since these were likely to be sterile marriages [*Gyn.* 1.11] (once again this underscores the purpose of marriage as procreation). He puts the ability to conceive between 14 and 40 [*Gyn.* 1.3.4], and menopause between 40 and 60 [*Gyn.* 1.4.20].<sup>28</sup> Elsewhere, however, Soranus points to the advantages of celibacy for women based on a study of celibate priestesses in Asia Minor, who fared better than non-celibate women (Clark 1993: 51).<sup>29</sup>

It is in this context that Apuleius depicts a rather unflattering picture of Pudentilla's middle years, painting her, in Hunink's words, as a 'medical case' (1998: 281):

*... tamen aegritudinem corporis ferre non poterat.... Mulier sancte pudica ... assuetudine coniugis torpens et diutino situ viscerum saucia, vitiatis intimis uteri saepe ad extremum vitae discrimen doloribus obortis exanimabatur. Medici cum obstetricibus consentiebant penuria matrimonii morbum quaesitum, malum in dies augeri, aegritudinem ingravescere.*

.. but her bodily infirmities had become intolerable..... This chaste and saintly lady ... owing to a long absence of a husband's embraces, made ill by the long inactivity of her organs - the insides of her uterus were damaged - began to suffer internal pains so severe that they brought her to the brink of the grave. Doctors and midwives agreed that the disease had its origin in her long widowhood, that the evil was increasing daily and her sickness steadily assuming a more serious character. [Apol. 69]<sup>30</sup>

Apuleius clearly wanted to emphasize that Pudentilla's initial reason for deciding to marry again had nothing to do with him - she was advised to do so by doctors, and furthermore she had decided to remarry on her own initiative before she had met him - all very rational indeed. Clearly, marriage as a 'health cure' for women in the 14 to 40 age group was recommended, certainly in the time before Christianity made celibacy more socially acceptable, which makes Apuleius' statement in the *Apologia* not beyond the bounds of contemporary belief.<sup>31</sup> Since this information on Pudentilla's reason for remarriage is a reliable reflection of contemporary beliefs (and even Hunink (1998: 277; 280) seems to think that it is) there may be a possible link to the depiction of Pudentilla

<sup>27</sup> According to Hippocratic theory the womb started wandering through the body as a result of its emptiness, which then eventually caused suffocation (Hunink 1977: 183).

<sup>28</sup> On the connection between health and fertility, see GOUREVITCH (1990): 'Se marier pour avoir des enfants', 56-60. Aetius [16.4] and Paul of Aegina [*Epit.* 3.60] estimate the age for menopause between 50 and 60, but that some women reached this phase at 35; the Byzantine Oribasius (325-400) in his *Synagoge Medicae* [142] gives the same range.

<sup>29</sup> For the history of hysteria (and some detailed commentary on Littré's French translation (1839-1861) of Hippocrates' women's diseases), see KING (1993): 'Once upon a text'. Galen's causes for 'uterine suffocation' in older widows already show some advancement in ideas. Human dissection was not practised in Late Antiquity and only at Alexandria was the human anatomy studied on the skeleton (Clark 1993: 65).

<sup>30</sup> Butler's translation rather modestly avoids the precise phrases describing Pudentilla's condition, amended here by HUNINK (1998): 'The enigmatic lady Pudentilla', 280 n.9.

<sup>31</sup> LADJIMI-SEBAÏ (1977): *La femme en Afrique à l'époque romaine*, 312, finds the arguments of Pudentilla's doctors related by Apuleius quite modern by today's standards. However, since hormones were discovered in the 1920s, estrogen treatment has done away with sexual activity as a 'cure' for menopause (Formanek 1990: 5).



as 'bewitched' by Apuleius (if we interpret this as the irrational behaviour of a woman in love), but the orator does not make the link. Pudentilla's irrational and love-sick behaviour is ascribed to magic by the prosecution, while in his defence Apuleius does nothing to connect her behaviour with her medical condition. It is possible that Apuleius goes into such great detail about Pudentilla's medical condition to imply a link with her supposedly obsessive love for himself but he seems to prefer another route to refute the charge of magic. In fact, he makes Pudentilla sound the picture of rationality.

## PERCEPTIONS OF DEATH AND THE AFTERLIFE

If the chances of survival to old age were marginally better in Roman African cities than in those of Roman Italy (Lassère 1977: 524 *passim*; Scheidel 1996b: 161), the local inhabitants were probably not aware of it. The causes of death - disease, age, pregnancy or childbirth-related causes, war and other violent deaths - were bewailed but accepted by a world in which there was a generally high mortality rate. Sometimes death was even ascribed to something other than natural causes:

LAMBESE (LAMBAESIS)

[CIL 2756 = CLE 1604]

QUAE FUERUNT PRAETERITAE | VITAE TESTIMONIA NUNC DECLARANTUR HOC SCRIBTURA POSTRE | MA. HAEC  
SUNT ENIM MORTIS | SOLACIA UBI CONTINETUR NOM[I] | NIS VEL GENERIS AETERNA MEMO | RIA. ENNIA HIC SITA  
EST FRUCTU | OSA KARRISSIMA CONIUX CER | TAE PUDICITIAE BONOQUE OBSE | QUIO LAUDANDA MATRONA  
| XV ANNO MARITI NOMEN ACCE | PIT IN QUO AMPLIUS QUAM XIII | VIVERE NON POTUIT QUAE NON UT MERUIT  
ITA MORTIS SORTEM | RETULIT CARMINIBUS DEF | IXA IACUIT PER TEMPORA MU[L] | TA UT EIUS SPIRITUS VI |  
EXTORQUERETUR QUAM | NATURAE REDDERETUR | CUIUS ADMISSI VEL MA | NES VEL DI CAELESTES E | RUNT  
SCELERIS VINDICES | AELIUS HAEC POSUIT PROCU | LINUS IPSE MARITUS LEGIO | NIS TANTAE III AUGUSTAE  
TRIBUNUS

The evidence of a past life are preserved here in this final text. These are then the consolations of death, perpetuating forever the memory of name and family. Here lies Ennia Fructuosa, most beloved wife, of unmistakable modesty, a matron to be praised for her unusual loyalty and goodness. She took the name of wife at the age of fifteen, but was unable to live with it for more than thirteen years. She did not get the end she deserved, to postpone the fatal end. Thus she rests, tied up by verse for eternity since her soul has been taken by violence rather than given naturally. The spirits of the departed or the gods of the heavens will avenge this crime. Aelius Proculus, her husband, a tribune in the great Third Legion, the Augusta, erected this monument.

Ennia Fructuosa was 28 when she died of unknown causes, which her husband ascribes to a curse.<sup>32</sup> Lassère (1977: 553) notes that inexplicable illnesses often gave rise to such explanations of the supernatural, as in the case of Apuleius and the epileptic Thallus [*Apol.* 18.9].

An unnatural death in the arena was something which found a natural home in the African provinces, where the Afro-Punic history of human sacrifice continued to flourish in its Romanized form as martyr executions and gladiatorial games.<sup>33</sup> Child sacrifice<sup>34</sup> has already been mentioned under the valuation of male/female children in ancient Africa and under the heading of motherhood. The Romans abhorred such practices, but rooting it out in outlying areas was probably difficult. As late as the 2<sup>nd</sup> century AD Tertullian comments that:

*Infantes penes Africam Saturno immolabantur palam usque ad proconsulatum Tiberii, qui eosdem dacerdotes in*

<sup>32</sup> Ennia may have been murdered, but the inscription implies a death by unknown causes and a suspicion of 'magic' which makes it a moot question whether she died of disease or foul play.

<sup>33</sup> On the gladiatorial games as human sacrifice, see HOPKINS (1983a): *Death and renewal*, 5 *passim*.

<sup>34</sup> The evidence for the rite of child sacrifice is discussed by BARNES (1971): *Tertullian. A historical and literary study*, 14-19, STAGER (1980): 'The rite of child sacrifice at Carthage', RIVES (1994b): 'Tertullian on child sacrifice', and more generally by SOREN ET AL (1990): *Carthage*, 123-145, for example the theory advanced by some scholars that the children buried in children's cemeteries were sacrificed after they had died of natural causes, citing as proof a large Roman children's cemetery near ancient Thysdrus under the protection of a mother goddess (possibly a Romanized Tanit).



*eisdem arboribus templi sui obumbratricibus scelerum votivis crucibus expostui, teste militia patriae nostrae, quae id ipsum munus illi proconsuli functa est. Sed et nunc in occulto pperseveratur hoc sacrum facinus.*

In Africa it was so that infants were sacrificed to Saturn, quite openly, until the proconsulate of Tiberius, who had these priests hung alive like votive offerings on crosses, in the shadow of the trees of their own temple, where their crimes had been committed. The soldiers of my own fatherland, who served the proconsul in this task, are witness to this. And to this very day, that holy crime persists in secret. [Apologet. 9.2-4]

Tertullian gives no indication to what particular level or proportion of the population this applied, but presumably it was not the élite privilege that it had been in Punic times. The evidence from the urns found in the tophet at Hadrumetum revealed that the sacrifice of children continued to the 1<sup>st</sup> century BC (Barnes 1971: 15) and of animals at least until the end of the 1<sup>st</sup> century AD. Thus far there has been no archaeological verification of the allegations made by Tertullian for the period in which he alleges these practices took place in secret. It is more likely that Tertullian is simply employing 'one of the standard rhetorical exempla of barbarity' (Barnes 1971: 15) and one that was very much relevant to his own context. Certainly the memory of the practice of infant sacrifice remained very much alive in the memories of North Africans. Augustine in the late 4<sup>th</sup> century still recalls how the Carthaginians had sacrificed their children because this was the greatest sacrifice of all, human life [De Civ. Dei 7.19], in contrast with the Christian God's more benign practices.

In North Africa during the 6<sup>th</sup> century Corippus still refers to human sacrifice:

*Maurorum hoc nomine gentes | Taenarium dixere Iovem, cui sanguine multo | humani generis mactatur victima pesti. | pro scelus infaustum!*

It is by this name that the tribes of Moors call upon Taenarian Jupiter and, spilling much blood, sacrifice human victims to his destructive godhead. What an abomination, alas! [Ioh. 8.307-310]

Corippus clearly sees this as a symbol of the barbarism of the Mauri (he does not tell us whether the victims were children or adults). If they were adults, such a native African tradition of human sacrifice may have filtered up from East Africa,<sup>35</sup> where live sacrifices remain central to their culture to this day (Kobishchanov 1979: 231).<sup>36</sup> In his novel *Aethiopika* Heliodorus gives a detailed (albeit fictional) account of the sacrifice to the Meroitic deities when the Aethiopian king Hydaspes is presented with the prisoners Theagenes and Chariclea [Aethiop. 9.1.25]. According to Meroitic law the males were sacrificed to the Sun and the females to the Moon [Aethiop. 10.2.-10]. At Axum inscriptions mention the offering of 50 captives to the god Mahrem.<sup>37</sup> The evidence of East Africa generally supports the idea of the sacrifice of foreigners rather than using class or gender distinctions to justify sacrifice of their own people.<sup>38</sup>

Africa also had a tradition of the sacrifice of the self, and a long line of sacrificial suicides stretch from legendary Dido or Hasdrubal's wife (who throws herself into the flames with her children as Carthage falls to the Roman siege [App., Pun. 131]) to Sophonisba, who drinks the cup of poison rather than feature in Scipio's

<sup>35</sup> KOBISHCHANOV (1979): *Axum*, 233, believes that the human sacrifices in Southern Arabia are more likely to be due to African influence than to that of the Hebrews and Phoenicians.

<sup>36</sup> In modern Africa, for example, it is common knowledge that during the celebration of mass in the 'Catholic' Church animals are sacrificed as part of the uniquely African tradition of worship. In the ancient context it is well known that syncretism played a large role in religious cult ritual, influencing indigenous, Roman and Christian traditions. Christian mothers for example still dedicated their children to the protection of the mother goddess, the Dea Caelestis, and Salvian complains that African Christians had no difficulty in sacrificing to this deity and then proceeding to worship in the Christian church [De Gub. Dei 8.2].

<sup>37</sup> *Deutsche Aksum-Expedition*, Berlin, 1913, volume 4, no. 10, 29-30. References in KOBISHCHANOV (1979): *Axum*, 307 n.53.

<sup>38</sup> Kobishchanov (1979: 233-234) has a number of other references to human sacrifice in East Africa up to the 19<sup>th</sup> century: among the Beja and Berbera and during the Middle Ages even among the Aethiopian Christians in the extreme northwest of the territory.



triumph [Liv. 30.7.8; App., *Pun.* 27-28; Dio 17.5]. The Christian era brought the deaths of female martyrs like Perpetua, Felicitas, Crispina and others. Already in antiquity authors made the connection between this long tradition of female suicide and Christian martyrdom. In his letter to the martyrs in prison Tertullian at one point specifically addresses the women among them, exhorting them to be as brave as men and to follow the example set by other Carthaginian women like Dido [*Ad Mart.* 4].<sup>39</sup> Sacrificial suicide by women in the North African context was therefore not unusual, and in fact in North Africa female martyrs outnumber the men (Shaw 1993: 14).

Salisbury also interprets the deaths of Perpetua, Felicity and the other martyrs in the context of ritual sacrifice that was so popular in the Punic African tradition. She points to the fact that elsewhere in the Roman Empire the execution of criminals in the arena was seen as inferior to gladiatorial contests for a celebration of the emperor's son's birthday. But in Carthage, with its history of human sacrifice, this event was regarded as highly appropriate to the importance of the occasion (Salisbury 1997: 122). In addition, the fact that the Christian victims were willing and even cheerful fits neatly into the ideal of human sacrifice as described by Minucius Felix, who mentions that: 'Infants are sacrificed (*immolabantur*) to him (Saturn) by their parents, who stifle their squallings by caresses and kisses to prevent the sacrifice of a tearful victim' [*Oct.* 30.3].<sup>40</sup> The sacrifice only had value if the parents and the children were willing, for which reason children of a very young age were chosen who would not know the meaning of death.

#### **Pagan and Christian women's beliefs in the afterlife**

It would probably be possible to fill several volumes with the doctrines on the afterlife of the various religious beliefs in the Roman African context. This is beyond the scope of this chapter. Only a few aspects relating particularly to burial practices and basic general beliefs in the afterlife have been highlighted in order to show how women fitted into the religious framework in Roman Africa. Other facets of women's roles in, and interaction with, the various religions of Roman Africa will be discussed more fully in Chapters 12 and 13 in connection with priesthoods and other religious roles for women.

As in the case of men, pagan women's tombstones were often dedicated to the *Manes*, the spirits of the dead. While this may reflect a mere convention, there is some indication that women believed that they might be united with loved ones after death. Tombs were sometimes equipped so that the deceased's life after death would be more agreeable. The sepulchres of Aelia Arisuth and Aelius Magnus/Maximus, for example, were fitted with funnels through which the libations of the living could be sent down to the deceased to sustain them in the hereafter, a common Roman practice (Hopkins 1983a: 211). On the other hand, such libations may also have been carried out to keep the dead from haunting the living. Hopkins (1983a: 201) notes on the lavish spending on elaborate tombs that 'they did this partly out of respect for the dead, partly in the hope of immortalizing their memory, and partly to impress the living'. Elaborate tomb structures were also a particular

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<sup>39</sup> It is possible that the document was written for Perpetua's group, although the dating of the work is uncertain.

<sup>40</sup> This young age for the victims is born out by the osteological evidence found at the tophet or sanctuary near Carthage, which reveals that the children were between one and three years old (Stager 1980: 4). The tophet near Carthage also included the remains of young sheep and goats from the centuries preceding child sacrifice (7<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> centuries BC in particular) (Stager 1980: 4-5). By the 4<sup>th</sup> century BC the human victims outnumbered the animal victims nine to one (Stager 1980: 7).





FIGURE 8.4 TOMB MOSAIC OF CORNELIA URBANILLA

mosaic.<sup>42</sup> In the centre a skeletal man is seated opposite a bearded man in himation who holds his wrist and touches his chin. Dunbabin suggests that, since no parallels of this theme are known from antiquity, and because of the awkwardness of the execution, this mosaic illustrates that there was no coherent iconography for the use of mosaics in particular religious contexts. It is also possible that Cornelia Urbanilla belonged to another philosophic-religious sect, but whatever the case may be, she was wealthy enough to have her religious/philosophical inclinations recorded after her death.

### Attitude to burial - changes from paganism to Christianity

Christianity put burial practices for both men and women into a whole new perspective. Traditionally the Roman dead were buried outside the city since corpses were viewed as polluting, whereas the Christians, Donatists in particular, treasured bones and other relics of martyrs and saints.<sup>43</sup> A wealthy noblewoman of Carthage, Lucilla, bought the bone of a martyr and took it to the Church, kissing it before taking the Eucharist, a most un-Roman like display [Optat., *De Schism. Don.* 1.16-19]. Another Carthaginian woman, Megetia, beat herself against the grid protecting the bones of Saint Stephen until she collapsed and was allowed to shed her tears on the holy relics (Brown 1981: 88).<sup>44</sup> With Christianity the martyr's tomb had been converted into a

<sup>41</sup> The tomb of Tin Hinan is discussed below, see pp. 243 n. 35; p. 253.

<sup>42</sup> The mosaic is interpreted somewhat differently by DURRY (1966): 'Iunia Baccula: une inscription du Constantinois', 294, who says that Urbanilla is the masculine figure in the centre expressing in this way her adherence to hermetism: 'Les êtres qui espèrent dans l'au-delà se confondre avec Dieu doivent assumer dans l'autre monde le sexe de Dieu qui est le sexe masculin'.

<sup>43</sup> A detailed treatment of the subject can be found in DUVAL (1982): *Loca sanctorum Africae: le culte des martyrs en Afrique du IV<sup>e</sup> au VIII<sup>e</sup> siècle*. Also SAXER (1980): *Morts, martyrs reliques en Afrique chrétienne aux premiers siècles. Les témoignages de Tertullien, Cyprien et Augustin à la lumière de l'archéologie africaine*.

<sup>44</sup> HOPKINS (1983a): *Death and renewal*, 231-232, points out that the martyrs became intermediaries between man and God, and also to some extent modified pure monotheism.



chapel. This partly explains why so many churches were built outside the towns, since this is where the burial grounds were, and many Christians wished to be buried near the martyrs, which resulted in further burials inside the church and around it. The enormous importance which was given to the martyrs in Africa, and which was one of the foundations of the Donatist Church, met with disapproval from the orthodox Church fathers. Augustine [*De Mor. Eccl. Cath.* 34] was critical of Christians who celebrated feasts in the tombs of the dead, and points to the pagan antecedents of this practice [*Conf.* 6.2] (this was something which was also commonly practised by pagans at Rome (Hopkins 1983a: 214)). Drunkenness at the martyrs' tombs was common [Aug., *Ep.* 22; Ambrose, *Helia* 17.2] and probably a continuance of the pagan festival the Parentalia or Feralia where celebrations were held on the tombs of the dead.

## **CONCLUSIONS ON ROMAN AFRICAN WOMEN IN LIFE AND DEATH**

How people were valued in death was some indication of their past status in life, and Shaw's investigation proves that in the African provinces the aged were given a status unknown in the rest of the Roman world, but that this occurred particularly in the less Romanized context. It is likely, however, that men were more advantaged by this perspective than women, since it appears that women on average were disadvantaged by indigenous African influences in terms of power and status.

The African continent may have provided some health benefits, but in this case it is indicated that indigenous women, or at least women who did not live in the large cities, were the ones to benefit rather than their more Romanized counterparts.





**PART III**

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**WOMEN IN ECONOMIC,  
CIVIC AND RELIGIOUS LIFE**

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## CHAPTER 9

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# PROFESSIONS AND FUNCTIONS FOR WOMEN

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The following chapters (9 to 13) deal with women who emerged from their traditional domestic role into public life. In this chapter I focus on the opportunities available to women of lower status groups to earn a living. No concerted attempt has been made here to deal with the freeborn, freed or enslaved in separate categories. In a number of instances this distinction is not even clear. The purpose is rather to investigate what types of employment were accessible to women, their opportunities for training and how they were regarded by contemporary society. As far as definitions are concerned, by 'profession' is meant in the first instance those specialized tasks by which women could make a living to which a specific descriptive title can be given, for example cook or nurse.<sup>1</sup> The tasks assigned to slaves were also in their own way a means of livelihood, and when slaves who had been trained for a specific task were freed they often continued it to make their living as freedpersons. These women have therefore also been included. In other instances, slave women performed 'functions' to which no particular title can be given, as in the case of the Photis in the *Metamorphoses*. She is asked to perform a variety of tasks: taking up the bags to the guest bedroom; equipping the guest (Lucius) with oil and towels and taking him to the baths [1.23]; taking care of Lucius' horse [1.24]; preparing the meal [2.7] and serving it at the table [2.11]; acting as lady's maid to her mistress - putting her to bed [2.16; 3.13].<sup>2</sup> A number of *ancillae* are attested in inscriptions<sup>3</sup> but where they provide no information on specific functions we may imagine that they were of general use about the house. Women involved in business and trade have also been dealt with in this chapter mainly for the reasons that either individually or together with their partners they were undoubtedly money earners, although it is not always possible to give a particular descriptive name to their function. Similarly at the lower end of the economic scale women were sometimes employed as rural labourers, for which there is some evidence from the African provinces which will be discussed below.

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<sup>1</sup> Note for example the large number of professions known to one African author: orators, grammarians, poets, writers, dialecticians, musicians, pantomimes, mimics, actors, singers, trumpeters, flutists, and pipers... boxers, charioteers, bareback riders, stilt-walkers, rope dancers, jugglers... pitch vendors, salt dealers, fishmongers, perfumers, goldsmiths, fowlers, weavers of winnows and baskets... fullers, wool combers, embroiderers, cooks, confectioners, muleteers, pimps, butchers, harlots [Arnob., *Adv. Nat.* 2.38].

<sup>2</sup> The fact that she is the only slave in the household of Milo is clearly meant to be a sign of her master's miserliness (*neque praeter unicam pascit ancillulam*, 'maintains no servants except one little maid' [1.21]).

<sup>3</sup> For example: *CIL* 12457, 24866, 24876, 27481. General discussion for the Western Empire in TREGGIARI (1979b): 'Questions on women domestics'.



## THE NATURE OF THE EVIDENCE

At levels below the social élite women must have been active in many economic areas about which no evidence remains today, and in general female employment is a field about which we remain largely ignorant, since beyond the fact that such women existed, we know very little. Since many of them came of relatively humble status and low income groups there may not have been money for lengthy epitaphs in expensive stone, which means that the wording is often formulaic and the execution cheap, both of which make dating such inscriptions difficult. Financial constraints affected women in particular, who are likely to have worked less often, for fewer years, and for lower wages than men (Kampen 1982: 74-5). The literary sources also contain only incidental information, for example chance references about women's training, qualifications or remuneration, such as that contained in general legal principles or textbooks such as those by Soranus. Iconographical images of working women in the Roman African provinces are as scarce as elsewhere in the ancient world (Kampen 1982: 69-70), again probably because financial constraints applied to these groups and an inscription was undoubtedly cheaper than a tomb relief.

The particular type of employment in the Roman African context specifically also affected firstly the economic standing of the individual and secondly the manner in which it was commemorated, if at all. Presumably we would not be superimposing modern ideas to too much to imagine that a female teacher had a better chance of being commemorated than a field labourer. The relatively low incidence of women in such inscriptions is either an indication of low economic status, that fewer women worked than men, or that few people took pride in female employment, or a combination of these three factors. Kampen (1982: 70-72) feels that, while an occupation was a source of pride for men, working wives may have detracted from an ambitious husband's image, since the image of the ideal Roman woman showed her virtue only by spinning and weaving activities. Nevertheless, the fact that their occupation is mentioned by their commemorators would imply that at a certain level in society women's professions had some standing. Work, prosperity and professional reputation were what mattered to what we might call the small businessman and woman. Even those who rose to a higher level in society, like the farmer from Mactaris, were proud of their humble origins and how their hard work had made them prosperous. Many more women than those actually mentioned in inscriptions must have worked side by side with their husbands, such as the wife of the baker of Caesarea [*AE* 1985, 906], but are seldom mentioned as sharing in their husband's profession. Tombstones from other parts of the Empire show both men and women next to the tools of their trade,<sup>4</sup> but no such examples have been found in Africa for women, again either because of lack of status or lack of means. If Veyne (1987: 132) is correct in assuming that such tools on tombstones were more than just insignia of trade and rather symbols of wealth through their trade, it is possible that Roman African women never reached the level of affluence of their counterparts elsewhere in the Roman world. Two well-known plaques of midwives (illustrated by French 1986:76-77) would indicate that elsewhere these women had a status and commensurate earnings that were above those of their Roman African equivalents. In Late Antiquity payment for qualified slaves of both sexes was equal in certain cases, indicating equal worth, but for

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<sup>4</sup> VEYNE (1987): *History of private life*, 132, interprets the tools of their craft as a sign of status - merchandise and tools were valuable capital - rather than insignia of trade. It is probably more likely, however, that for the deceased status lay as much in their achievement of wealth as in their trade itself.



those who had to earn their money independently remuneration probably depended on individual circumstances such as location, qualifications and demand.<sup>5</sup>

Because the sample of inscriptions and other evidence of female employment is so small, there is little merit in attempting to pinpoint a higher density of female workers in any particular area. The evidence is centred on the larger cities, particularly those types of employment which needed a commercial forum, for example clothes' sellers. The highest density was found in Africa Proconsularis (Carthage, Mactaris) but also other large centres like Iol Caesarea. Only the cities of Tripolitania remain singularly unrepresented by female workers in inscriptions. Our only evidence from this area is in mosaics, which will be discussed more fully below.

The inscriptional evidence would seem to indicate that professions in general are not well represented in Roman Africa, although there are a few examples of the traditional 'female' categories of employment like hairdressing, woolworking or midwifery, which are linked closely to the domestic occupation of women in their own homes. While other areas such as entertainment brought opportunities for both men and women, only one extant example already mentioned [*AE* 1994, 1903] derives from a field which is, in Africa as elsewhere, dominated by men, that of professional education. However it is with the most commonly attested professional activity for women that the discussion commences.

## **MIDWIVES AND DOCTORS**

The profession for women mentioned most often in inscriptions was that of midwifery and obstetrics. The distinction between midwives and women doctors as to their precise function is not quite clear, and epigraphical evidence on these female professions unfortunately contains little more than the name and the occupation (Nickel 1979: 516).<sup>6</sup> From medical writers we know that midwives assisted in birth and general care of pregnant women, but female doctors also tended to specialize in women's diseases and conditions [*Galen* 12.250.3 *passim*, 13.341.2]. It is likely that midwives were cheaper and easier to use than to call in a doctor with professional training (Clark 1993: 63). It would appear from the evidence collected here that there was some distinction in status, however, as we shall see.

### **Midwives:**

Midwives seem to have had a basic practical training rather than an 'education'. There is no particular evidence in Roman antiquity of mother-to-daughter or slave apprenticeship traditions which would imply a type of in-house training, although this seems quite likely.<sup>7</sup> French (1986: 72-73) points out that all but one of the samples

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<sup>5</sup> According to the *Codex Iustiniani* 6.43.1 (AD 531): 'The value of male and female slaves over 10 years old, if they have no skill, should be assessed at 20 solidi, that of those younger than 10 at no more than 10 solidi; if they are craftsmen, they may be assessed at up to 30 solidi, whether they are male or female with the exception of secretaries and physicians of either sex. We want secretaries to be valued at 50 solidi, and doctors and midwives at 60. Eunuchs under 10 are worth up to 30 solidi, older ones up to 50; if they have also learned a craft, up to 70'.

<sup>6</sup> All of the inscriptions mentioning male doctors in Roman Africa were relatively brief (limited to essential names and occupation). Of the 21 in the *CIL* only three showed Greek origins, and it is possible that where wealthy Rome-based families imported Eastern doctors for their expertise, Roman African families were not in the same category of wealth. Medical doctors therefore do not appear to have been particularly affluent in Roman Africa.

<sup>7</sup> Caelia Victoria [*CIL* 5155] died at the relatively young age of 26, which would imply that women were trained in this profession quite early in life.



from Rome indicate freedwomen or daughters of freedwomen, which indicates this type of training.<sup>8</sup> According to Soranus of Ephesus [*Gyn.* 1.4-5] a midwife had to have knowledge about women's diseases and also about general medicine. He therefore argues that the best midwives should be literate and presumably he intended that they should read his work. A shorter and cheaper treatise by the African Caelius Aurelianus may have been used by women in the medical profession in these provinces. Midwives were not only used in cases of pregnancy and labour. They were also called in where virginity was an issue, as in the example provided by Augustine [*De Civ. Dei* 1.18].<sup>9</sup> Augustine's account shows that not all midwives were particularly competent, where some actually destroyed the evidence they were supposed to preserve. Soranus also recommends that a midwife live a virtuous life since women opened their hearts to her, and that she be possessed of a number of other virtues, many of which fall neatly into the definition of a good wife.<sup>10</sup> This makes the following combination quite reasonable and relatively common among the few samples that we have:

HR MEST (MUSTIS) [CIL 15593]  
D(IS) M(ANIBUS) S(ACRUM) | CAELIA BONO | SA MAZICA | OBSTETRIX MA | RITA CASTISSI | MA ET PUDICIS [SIMA]  
VIXIT | ANNIS XXXXII | M(ENSIBUS) III H(IC) S(ITA) E(ST).  
Consecrated to the spirits of the departed. Caelia Bonosa Mazica, midwife, most chaste and modest wife, who lived 42 years and three months. Here she rests.

Like another midwife, Aurelia Macula from Mactaris [*AE* 1980, 936], Caelia Bonosa Mazica was clearly of African origin (Macula, Mazica) but Romanized enough to bear two Latinized *cognomina* and to have a Roman tombstone. In neither of these cases is the husband specifically mentioned, but from elsewhere we do know that the husband of Caelia Bonosa Mazica was a Roman citizen by the name of Publius Flavius, son of Felix, of the tribe *Cornelia*. In Utica, Licinia Victoria is buried with her husband, and her profession as midwife is mentioned (but no occupation for her husband):

UTIQUE (UTICA) [CIL 25394; ILAFRIC 427]  
D(IS) M(ANIBUS) S(ACRUM) | L(UCIUS) VALERIUS | VALERIANUS | PIUS VIXIT ANNIS LXII | M(ENSIBUS) V DIES VII | LICINA | VICTORIA | OBSETRIX PIE VIXIT | ANNIS IL | M(ENSIBUS) VI D(IEBUS) XIII. O(SSA) V(ESTRA) B(ENE) Q(UIESCANT) T(ERRA) V(OBIS) L(EVIS) S(IT)  
Consecrated to the spirits of the departed, Lucius Valerius Valerianus, pious, lived 62 years, 5 months and 7 days. Licinia Victoria, dutiful, midwife, lived 49 years, 6 months and 9 days. That their bones may rest in peace, the earth lie lightly on you.

In the case of Irene, her midwife occupation was clearly connected to the fact that Faustus was a doctor:<sup>11</sup>

KHAMISSA (THUBURSICU NUMIDARUM) [CIL 4896; ILALGI 1377]  
DIIS M(ANIBUS) SAC(RUM) | IRENE OPSE | TRIX FAUSTI | D(E)S(UO)S(IBM) MEDICI (UXOR?) | V(IXIT) A(NNIS) XXXIII  
Consecrated to the spirits of the departed. Irene, midwife, of Faustus, doctor, (erected) at his own cost(?). She lived 33 years.

Irene was probably originally a slave. French (1986: 73) believes that the wealthy sometimes purchased qualified slaves from the Greek East, which from her single Greek name is plausible in this case. If the conjecture of *uxor* is correct, her marriage to Faustus would have occurred after her enfranchisement. In other

<sup>8</sup> The only exception is a slave. FRENCH (1986): 'Midwives and maternity care', 72, has collected only 16 samples of midwives from Rome, of which 9 indicate membership of large wealthy households. It seems therefore that these women were employed in this task as slaves and were eventually able to purchase their freedom.

<sup>9</sup> Already referred to in Chapter 6 under virginity, p. 94.

<sup>10</sup> Under the influence of Christianity the role of caregiver or nurse in the modern sense of the term filled out a different category which heretofore had been unfamiliar to Roman life, and which had developed out of the position of deaconess in the Christian church structure. This position was however not remunerated and will be discussed more fully in Chapter 13.

<sup>11</sup> Another example of a *medicus* husband and *obstetrix* wife was found at Ostia. Further examples in GARDNER (1986a): *Women in Roman law and society*, 240; 255 n. 25.



instances women may have practised midwifery because in their widowhood or single state they had to support themselves. The following example was possibly a freedwoman. No husband is mentioned:

MECHTA DJILLAOUA

CAGNAT (1894): *BCH*, 345 NR 20

D(IS) M(ANIBUS) S(ACRUM) | STABERI | A QUARTA | OBSETRIS (sic) | V(IXIT) AN(NIS) LXXXX  
Consecrated to the Manes. Staberia Quarta, midwife, lived 90 years.

In another example the fact that Caelia Victoria is commemorated by a widowed brother would imply that she was freeborn:

SOUK AHRAS (THAGASTE)

[*CIL* 5155; *ILALG* 1887]

D(IS) M(ANIBUS) S(ACRUM) | NOVIAE DATIVAE | BONI D(IS) M(ANIBUS) S(ACRUM) | CAELIAE VICTORI | AE  
O | MINIS | FEMINAE | PIAE QUI | V(IXIT) A(NNIS) XXXV OBSTE | TRICI RA | RISSIMAE PIAE QUAE | VIXIT AN | NIS  
| H(IC) S(ITA) XXVI | H(IC) S(ITA)

..C]AE[L]I[U]S NORI | [CUS] CONIUGI ET | [SO]ROR[ ] CARIS | [SI]MIS.

Consecrated to the spirits of the departed. To Novitia Dativa, a woman of all goodness and piety, who lived 35 years. Here she (rests).

Consecrated to the spirits of the departed. To Caelia Victoria, midwife, of most rare piety, who lived 26 years.

Here she (rests).

Caelius Noricus (dedicated this) to his dearest wife and sister.

Treggiari (1976: 86) concluded that about half of the extant Roman inscriptions mentioning women doctors and midwives are freedwomen, and as stated above, often associated with wealthy households.<sup>12</sup> There is really insufficient evidence to reach any definite conclusions about the midwife profession in Roman Africa, but the picture contrasts with that presented by the evidence from Rome in two aspects. Where midwives in Rome often bear Greek or Oriental names, and all appear to be of slave origins within two generations, in the case of Roman Africa there is only one instance of a Greek name (Irene) while the other six women are either freeborn or freedwomen.<sup>13</sup> None of them appear to be associated with large wealthy households.

### Doctors:<sup>14</sup>

CARTHAGE

[*CIL* 24679]

ASYLLIA L(UCI) F(ILIA) POLIA | MEDICA H(IC) S(ITA) E(ST) | VIX(IT) A(NNIS) LXV | FUSCIUS L(IBERTUS) D(E)  
S(UO) F(ECIT)

Here lies Asyllia Polia, daughter of Asyllus, woman doctor; she lived 65 years. Fuscus, (her?) freedman, made this tomb at his own cost.

The inscription has been dated to the 1<sup>st</sup> century AD. Asyllia Polia appears from the mention of *L(uci) f(ilia)* to have been freeborn (possibly the daughter of a freedman), and Gardner (1986a: 240) points out that this is very rare in the Roman Empire. How she came by her training we have no means of knowing, possibly in the family or through apprenticeship,<sup>15</sup> acquiring her knowledge while working with male or female doctors, or even possibly by consulting medical textbooks if she could have afforded them.

This single example of a female doctor from Roman Africa may be an indication that it was not a profession

<sup>12</sup> FRENCH (1986): 'Midwives and maternity care', 72-73, also records that most midwives and women doctors were freedwomen in Rome. Certainly no women of families that had had freedom for several generations are recorded, and this profession clearly had no appeal for them.

<sup>13</sup> Apart from Irene and possibly Staberia Quarta, there is also no indication of the typical Greek or Latinate slave *praenomina* evident in the Roman inscriptions in the names represented here: Caelia Bonosa Mazica; Aurelia Macula; Licinia Victoria; Caelia Victoria.

<sup>14</sup> JACKSON (1988): *Doctors and diseases*, 86 n.4, lists 16 female doctors across the Empire, of which only 4 were based in Rome.

<sup>15</sup> A number of parallels from other parts of the Roman Empire are cited by GARDNER (1986a): *Women in Roman law and society*, 240-242 and notes.



advertized for women as such, who were more likely to get the title of 'midwife'.<sup>16</sup> Examples of male doctors (*medicus*, ἰατρός) in Roman Africa number 21 in the *CIL* alone, and it is therefore not due to a lack of opportunity or demand for such skills.<sup>17</sup> Augustine remarks that 'very often people are unwilling to give due recognition to a doctor' (*nam plerique nec medico volunt reddere honorem suum*) [*Ep.* 153.23], which does not imply a particularly great appreciation for their services. In Africa the profession was not without some status, even if it was self-advertised - one inscription (for a male doctor) reads *medica nobilis arte* [*CIL* 11347]. According to Ulpian obstetricians had the same status whether male or female as doctors, even though both worked only with female patients [*Dig.* 50.13.1.2 and *Cod. Iust.* 6.43.3.1]. There is no evidence in Africa of any male doctors of this kind, however, though there were other types of specialization.<sup>18</sup> Apuleius' reference to *medici cum obstetricibus* [*Apol.* 69.19] with regard to Pudentilla's condition seems to distinguish between doctors and obstetricians, although both were clearly concerned with Pudentilla's illness owing to long widowhood. The distinction is therefore probably based on the fact that the latter were in effect midwives. Conversely Asyllia Polia may also have practised medicine generally rather than only obstetrics and women's diseases. If that is so it may explain why she is called a *medica* as distinct from an *obstetrix*.<sup>19</sup>

Asyllia is a name of Eastern origin and many medical practitioners originated from this part of the Roman world.<sup>20</sup> French (1986: 72) notes that in the East obstetrical care was a respected profession in which women could earn a living and enough respect to publish works read and quoted by male practitioners. In a later article (1988:1358) the same author also comments that in the East more women are recorded as 'doctors' (as a *medica* or ἰατρίνη), whereas in the Western provinces the title 'midwife' (*obstetrica*) is more common. This is clearly also the case in Roman Africa. It would seem that Asyllia Polia was a woman of some status, however. Fuscus may have been her freedman and her assistant and there is no mention of a husband. Perhaps, like Aemilia Hilaria, the aunt of Ausonius, she was a *virgo devota* (dedicated virgin) who 'occupied herself in the art of healing like a man' [*Par.* 6].

## NURSES

The term *nutrix* can refer to a wet-nurse or general caregiver. Since some are commemorated by their charges at quite an advanced age, one assumes that these women had a longer relationship with them than merely the breast-feeding period. Iulia Pistrix, nurse to Iulius Bassus at Lambaesis is recorded as having reached 100 years of age [*CIL* 2889], and Iulia Almyrde was 63 when she was commemorated by Gaius Iulius Quintinus also at Lambaesis [*CIL* 2917].<sup>21</sup> The fact that in these two cases the nurses share their *nomina* with their charges

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<sup>16</sup> 'Most female physicians, whether or not they were specialists, probably treated exclusively or predominantly women's diseases, and the title *medica* may have been synonymous or nearly so, with that branch of medicine' (Jackson 1988: 86).

<sup>17</sup> We know that medicinal knowledge was not confined to those who formally advertised themselves as doctors. In the *Apologia* Apuleius mentions that a sick woman came to him for medical attention, and Apuleius was not a physician [48].

<sup>18</sup> For example a ἰατρός ὀφθαλμικός [*CIL* 21105].

<sup>19</sup> In another inscription from Spain [*CIL* II 4314], the death of a slave girl, whom the knowledge of the *medica* could not save, is lamented: *Ussere ardentis intus mea viscera morbi, vincere quod medicae non potuere manus* in LE GALL (1969): 'Metiers de femmes au C.I.L.', 128.

<sup>20</sup> The *cognomen* Polia is otherwise unknown; the reading is possibly Polla, which is known from other examples in Africa [*CIL* 8993; 3572; 16005; 16131].

<sup>21</sup> Another example is too fragmentary to indicate anything beyond the fact that this woman was a nurse:



implies that they were probably freedwomen of the same household as their charges (Bradley 1991: 19). In fact nurses were seen as family retainers, almost as clients, where reciprocal obligations existed.<sup>22</sup> At Thagaste Monica's slave nurse had also been the nurse of her own father, and she had gone with Monica into her new home where Augustine was born [Conf. 9.8.17]. *Nutrices* seem to have attended their charges day and night, sometimes sleeping with them in the same room away from the rest of the household [Conf. 1.6.7]. The epitaphs in themselves attest to fond relations between nurses and the children assigned to them. Iulia Pistrix is called *optima* and [H]ateria Ianuaria below is *karis[simae]*:

HR BRISGANE [CIL 27988; ILALGI 3790]  
D(IS) M(ANIBUS) S(ACRUM) | [H]ATERIA IANUARIA V(IXIT) A(NNIS) XL. CERDONI | US NUTRICI SU(A)E  
KARIS[SIMAE FECIT].  
Consecrated to the spirits of the departed. Hateria Ianuaria lived 40 years. Cerdonius had this erected for his  
dearest nurse.

The prevalence of using wet-nurses has already been discussed in Chapter 4. Unsurprisingly they were of humble status and were routinely disparaged: 'the milk, the morals and the Latin of the common run of nurse were suspect' (Dixon 1988: 120).<sup>23</sup> Fronto speaks critically of the typical nurse who likes to keep her charge dependent on her and laments his or her graduation to the outside world [Ep. ad Ant. Pium 1.5.2]. But in the later period Augustine's references to nurses paint a different picture:

*nam et latina aliquando infans utique nulla noveram, et tamen advertendo didici sine ullo metu atque cruciatu,  
inter etiam blandimenta nutricum ...*

There was also a time when as an infant I knew not a word of Latin. Yet by marking I got that without any fear  
or tormenting, even by my nurse's prattlings to me .... [Conf. 1.14]

Augustine's nurse spoke to him in Latin, most probably her mother tongue. But although Quintilian was of the opinion that for a solid grounding in Latin the *nutrix* and *paedagogus* of an infant and future orator should speak good Latin [Instit. Orat. 1.1.5], this was probably not common. Since children's importance in society increased with their age and chances of survival, so the status of those who were involved with them at different levels was adjusted. The nurse gave way to the *paedagogus* or *paedagoga*, who in turn was superceded by the *grammaticus*.<sup>24</sup> The following inscription attests to a *paedagoga* from Thugga, who probably chaperoned her charges when they went to school. The simple and rather cursory nature of the epitaph is a reflection of her humble status:

DOUGGA (THUGGA) [CIL 1506]  
CORNELIA | FORTUNATA | PAEDAGOGA | P(IA) V(IXIT) A(NNIS) LXX | H(IC) [S(ITA) E(ST)].  
Cornelia Fortunata, dutiful, educator, lived 70 years. Here she rests.

She may have given younger children a basic upbringing or even education at home. Monica and her sisters were trained in table manners by a slave woman [Conf. 9.8.17]. Cornelia Fortunata was clearly not a slave when she died. Many women in domestic employment who were enfranchised may have preferred to stay with the family and the household they knew rather than taking their chances among the urban hordes.

CARTHAGO [CIL 13191]  
G[ELLIA] ? EN ... | ... NUTRIX | ... [V]IXIT AN(NIS) ...

<sup>22</sup> In Rome many of them were buried in family vaults or remembered by family members long after their services had been rendered (Dixon 1988: 145).

<sup>23</sup> The evidence of towns in Italy indicates that wet-nurses, whether slaves, freedwomen or poor working women, were of humble status (Bradley 1991: 20).

<sup>24</sup> Cicero allocated relative status to a variety of employments according to their benefit to society and suitability to a particular rank [De Off. 1.150-151]. The production of food and clothing were considered tasks of a menial kind.



## TEACHERS

As a profession this was not the most likely one for women, of which our meagre evidence may be taken as proof. On the other hand, Fantham *et al* (1994: 382) speculate that the scarcity of women working in areas outside the traditionally domestic fields of midwifery, woolworking, and so on, is possibly 'an indication that it seldom added enough to a woman's status to merit inclusion on a tombstone (or perhaps even lowered her status in comparison with the traditional domestic occupations)'. The wording of the tombstone of a teacher from Caesarea, Volusia Tertullina [AE 1994, 1903] shows that such a generalization is not always true. She is even praised as being 'exceptional' (*incomparabili*) in her field, which, although it may not be meant literally, is still a term of praise even within a convention.

CHERCHEL (CAESAREA)

[AE 1994, 1903]

D(IS) M(ANIBUS) S(ACRUM) | VOLUSIAE TERTULLINAE MARITAE CASTAE ET INCOMPARABILI GRAMMAT(ICA)E  
| QUAE VIX(IT) AN(NOS) XLIII M(ENSES) III DIE(S) V, QUAE CUM | MARITO FECIT AN(NOS) XX M(ENSEM) I DIE(S)  
XIII | DOMIT(IUS) FLAVIANUS INCOMPA[(RABIL)-...].

Consecrated to the souls of the departed. For Volusia Tertullina, chaste wife and exceptional teacher, who lived 43 years, three months and five days, who spent 20 years, 1 month and 14 days with her husband, Domitius Flavianus, exceptional ....<sup>25</sup>

Volusia Tertullina was probably the daughter of the *grammaticus* Volus[ius I]unior [CIL 21107], also known from Caesarea. We are reminded of Quintilian's praise for other daughters who followed in their father's footsteps: Hortensia, the daughter of the orator Quintus Hortensius, and Laelia, daughter of Gaius Laelius, the latter said to have reproduced the elegance of her father's language in her own speech [Instit. Orat. 1.1.6].<sup>26</sup> It is quite possible that Volusia Tertullina was taught at home, by her father, or in her father's school. It is more likely that she showed an aptitude for her studies and it then became her career, rather than that this was the aim of her father from the outset, since the absence of evidence for other women in this field proves its unusual nature. In the inscription above the dedicator hastens to assure the reader that she was a chaste wife (*marita casta*) first and an excellent teacher (*incomparabili grammatica*) second.

Traditionally the *grammaticus* provided a more advanced level of education, teaching children from the age of twelve to sixteen Latin and Greek literature. From Augustine we know that Vergil, Cicero, Sallust and Terence were studied in some detail. Other subjects such as science, philosophy or history received no attention *per se*. A typical school activity is mentioned by Augustine when he recalls how he won a prize for an oration on the rage and pain of Juno as she watched Aeneas leave for Italy [De Civ. Dei 1.3]. An inscription found in the modern Hr Jenoun [CIL 591; ILT 504; CLE 817] takes a line from the *Aeneid* [1.253; 4.539], a suitably African context, implying that a knowledge of Vergil would have been common among the educated to recognise

[CIL 591; ILT 504; CLE 817]

D(IS) M(ANIBUS) S(ACRUM) | [HE]LVIA SEVERA SACERDOS CAS|[TI]SSIMA ANNIS LXXXV | VIXIT IUDICIO |  
SENUIT MERITO | OBIT EXEMPLO | [HIC] PIETATIS HONOS VETERIS STAT GRATIA FACT[I] ? | L(UCIUS)  
FABRICIUS GEMELLUS INPAR MATRI | OBSERVANTISSIME

Consecrated to the souls of the departed. Helvia Severa, chaste priestess, who lived 85 years 'Here is honour for piety, gratitude persists for past service.' Lucius Fabricius Gemellus, no match for/unequal to his most respectful mother.

Augustine was taught Greek letters also, but since these classes bored him we may imagine that the quality of

<sup>25</sup> The inscription is unfortunately damaged, but a husband and wife team of teachers is not impossible here.

<sup>26</sup> Whatever their mothers' contribution to their education, this is not mentioned by the ancient authors.



his Greek education was not very good [*Conf.* 1.12.20]. Augustine himself provides some evidence from his time as a *grammaticus* in Thagaste, since we know that his Greek was poor, and he would therefore have been a less than proficient teacher in this literature, if he taught it at all.<sup>27</sup> But Augustine [*Conf.* 1.13-14] also attests Greek was taught even in small towns.<sup>28</sup> Thus while in theory it is entirely possible that Volusia Tertullina was able to read both Latin and Greek texts with enough competency to be able to teach in both languages, it is also equally possible that she taught only Latin literature to her students.

Female teachers are not entirely unknown from Antiquity. Pomeroy (1984: 48) describes one of six painted metopes from Cyrene, dated to between 370 and 283 BC, which shows a woman with a stick or pointing rod standing before a kneeling girl, on which Pomeroy comments that 'the theme is education'.<sup>29</sup> John of Ephesus [*De Beatis Orient.* 17.1]<sup>30</sup> mentions a widow who for a fee taught the art of drawing to girls. The word γραμματική is used in only one other instance of a woman, inscribed with her name 'Hermione' on a female mummy from Memphis dated to the 1<sup>st</sup> century AD (Pomeroy 1984: 185n.42). About the nature of teaching some information has been handed down about (presumably) male teachers in antiquity, who by all accounts were strict disciplinarians who even beat their teachings into their students [for example, Aug. *Conf.* 1.13.20-22; Lux., *Epigr.* 8]. A plausible case can then be made for the fact that female teachers taught only girls (like the widow of Ephesus mentioned above or Maria, the betrothed of the emperor Honorius, who was taught by her mother), also to avoid the type of problem which Valerius Maximus points to [6.50.3], that teacher and pupil might indulge in improper sexual conduct. If this is the case it may be that their literary accomplishments would not be subjected to as stringent a standard as if they were teaching the 'sons of the realm'. The teaching talents of Volusia Tertullina are called 'exceptional', although of course Latin epigraphy is inclined to superlative adjectives. We find no further evidence of female teachers in later periods of African antiquity, which is not surprising since most of our authors are Christian, and the apostle Paul had spoken out against women teachers [1 *Timothy* 2.12], which may have made writers wary of mentioning it.<sup>31</sup>

The remuneration for a woman in such employment is speculative. The inscription mentioning Volusia Tertullina has been dated to the middle of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century AD. Juvenal [*Sat.* 7.186-190] and Suetonius [*De Gramm.* 23.2; 3.4] indicate that fees could vary widely. Diocletian's Price Edict of 301 stipulates that a *grammaticus* could charge 200 denarii per month for each pupil (whereas a *ludi magister* earned only 50 denarii) but according to Marrou (1956: 275) this was still only the equivalent of four days' work by a skilled labourer. Volusia Tertullina would not have made a fortune from her profession, but this is not surprising in view of the position in later ages, including modern times.

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<sup>27</sup> Augustine also later taught rhetoric in Carthage [*Conf.* 4.12; *Contra Acad.* 2.2.3] and Milan [*Conf.* 5.23].

<sup>28</sup> VILJAMAA (1991): 'Suetonius on Roman teachers of grammar', 3845-6, notes Suetonius' emphasis on the incorporation of Greek in Roman education.

<sup>29</sup> While admittedly no other explanation springs to mind, the scarcity of references to women as teachers in Greek and Roman antiquity would urge some caution in interpretation. Pomeroy gives no other details about the painting.

<sup>30</sup> = *Patrologia Orientalis* 17.1. Syriac text edited and translated by E. W. BROOKS (1983, Turnhout: Edition Brepols)

<sup>31</sup> Christian attitudes to female teachers are discussed by CLARK (1993): *Women in Late Antiquity*, 128-9. Generally it was seen as going against female modesty for a woman as teacher to set herself above a man.



## PERSONAL SERVICES

It is debatable whether some of the services discussed below can be considered 'professions' as opposed to 'functions'. However, I have followed what appears to have been the Roman attitude where certain functions were deemed important enough to be inscribed on tombstones as the qualifier for an individual, however mundane the task may appear to us.

A number of domestic slaves had specific functions and titles. An inscription found at Calama mentions a *vilica*:

SATURNINA TI(BERII) | CLAUDI | CAE(SARIS) | VIL(ICA) | VIX(IT) A(NNIS) XXX | ET VENU | STA F(ILIA) VI(XIT)  
| A(NNIS) XV H(IC) | [E(ST)] S(ITA) [ILALG1 323].

Saturnina, housekeeper of Tiberius Claudius Caesar, lived 30 years and Venusta, her daughter, lived 15 years. Here she rests.

Saturnina was clearly a slave who was attached to an imperial estate belonging to Claudius. In most cases the *vilica* was simply the wife of the *vilicus* or bailiff (Pomeroy 1975: 192). As a slave she could not formally have been married and no fellow slave is mentioned in the inscription who would fill this role informally. Possibly she held the position of *vilica* independently. She probably co-ordinated the activities of other slaves concerned with the chores in and near the house, much as her mistress would have done: storage of produce, preserving, cooking, rearing of animals and so on (Treggiari 1976: 77), the kind of tasks also performed by Berber women for their men [Procop., *De Bell. Vand.* 4.7.3].



FIGURE 9.1 SLAVE DOING THE HAIR OF HER MISTRESS. 1<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY AD

The importance of appearance in Roman culture has already been discussed in Chapter 7. The slaves who were assigned the tasks of looking after the adornment of hair and body must have been kept very busy. It is possible that for some of the intricate hairstyles we see in sculpture, professional hairdressers were used.<sup>32</sup> The likelihood of wigs also suggests that these were not made at home by slaves, or if so, at least by specialized slaves.

The scene illustrated in Figure 9.1 was a typical indication of the status of the deceased woman, as are all illustrations of women undergoing a beauty ritual. Her slaves or attendants probably had a less easy life than might be supposed.<sup>33</sup> The amount of attention paid to beauty rituals is supported by the evidence that these professionals had their own hierarchies, probably based on experience and apprenticeship.<sup>34</sup>

<sup>32</sup> See also S. MOLLARD-BESQUES (1947): 'Scène de coiffure - Groupe en terre cuite', *Bulletin des Musées de France*, 9. Reference given by Deneauve (1964-65: 126). A list of 29 *ornatrices* working in private homes in Rome alone is given in TREGGIARI (1976): 'Jobs for women', 78-80.

<sup>33</sup> Ovid mentions that a woman who scratches her hairdresser or stabs her with a hairpin 'does not make herself appealing' [*Ars Amat.* 3.239-242; *Amores* 1.14, 16, 18], and images of angry and temperamental mistresses can be found in the more cynical writings of Martial [2.66] and Juvenal [6.486-507].

<sup>34</sup> According to Roman law [*Dig.* 32.1.65], no-one could bear the title *ornatrix* unless he or she had received training from a master of the art (Gardner 1986: 241).



CHERCEL (CAESAREA) [CIL 9428; ILS 5266]  
 IULIA MIMESIS SUBORN | ATRIS IONICI ET CANO | NIS HIC SITA SIT QUAE VI | XIT ANNIS XLIIIX TIBI ET | TUIS  
 T(ERRA) L(EVIS) (SIT)  
 May Iulia Mimesis, under-hairdresser of Ionicus and Cano lie here, she who lived 48 years. May the earth rest lightly on you and yours.

Other personal servants were definitively slaves (Treggiari 1976: 77), and the mistress of a house could have several to attend to her. Dunbabin (1989: 28-29) describes a set of mosaics from the baths at Sidi Ghrib in Tunisia, where one of the panels shows the mistress of the house engaged in the cult of beauty, surrounded by the paraphernalia of the bath and assisted by several female servants to assist her as she bedecks herself with jewels. The demand for servants in this context is mentioned in passing by Tertullian (*cura capilli et cutis*, 'care of hair and of the skin' [De Cult. Fem. 1.4]), who naturally frowns on such luxury. Others qualified in this area served professionally at the baths, as seems likely in the case of Fausta:

CHERCEL (CAESAREA) (FRAGMENTED) [CIL 21097]  
 FAUSTA  
 [SALTAT- or UNCT-]RIX | [IUBAE (?) REGI]S MYRREPSI L(IBERTA)? | [LIBR]ARI UXOR.  
 EST  
 Fausta, dancer or masseuse (?).. freedwoman of Juba II ...<sup>35</sup>

It is not impossible, though, that a rich woman might take an assortment of such servants with her when she visited the baths (Treggiari 1976: 81).<sup>36</sup> Fausta was most probably a masseuse, as identified by Ladjimi-Sebaï (1977: 366). Women were also involved in selling such products, according to one inscription in which a husband and wife were traders in perfumes and spices [ILAlg I 2236]. According to the commentary in the *Inscriptions latines de l'Algérie*, this couple were not slaves, which means they were selling for their own profit. The inscription was also flanked on either side by portraits of the husband and wife, which indicates that their finances had prospered.

Other specialists attended to wardrobe and clothing.

CHERCEL (CAESAREA) [CIL 10938]  
 ROGATA SARCINATR(IX) SATURNO V(OTUM) L(IBENTE) A(NIMO) S(OLVIT)  
 Rogata, clothes' maker/mender, released from her vow to Saturn of her own free will.

It appears that the making and mending of clothing was a profession in which women dominated in the Roman world, although otherwise the cloth trade (for example weaving) was dominated by men (Gardner 1986: 238).<sup>37</sup> This can be seen for example in the world of cloth-making depicted in Manilius' *Astronomica*.<sup>38</sup> The commercial production of fabric (as opposed to the weaving at home by women) is well illustrated by this passage. The practice of selling the clothing was also an area in which women were active:

HADRUMETUM [ILT 194]  
 IANU[A]RIA VESTIARIA | IN PACE  
 Ianuaria, clothes seller, in peace

Whether they were door-to-door saleswomen or sold their products at markets we have no way of knowing.<sup>39</sup> The eight examples given by Treggiari (1976: 84-5) for Rome are all slaves (four men and four women), which

<sup>35</sup> *Myrrepsi ... librari*, a quantity of pigmentation or perfume, is possibly related to *unctrix*.

<sup>36</sup> TREGGIARI (1976): 'Jobs for women', 80, lists only 3 for Rome. It is possible that this form of employment may have had a very low status.

<sup>37</sup> There is evidence for 11 *sarcinatrices* for imperial women, and 3 other examples for Rome (Treggiari 1976: 85).

<sup>38</sup> Manilius' work enumerates a wide variety of jobs from acrobats to wool-workers listed in the index to the Loeb edition (1977: 380).

<sup>39</sup> Possibly this was also the trade of her Punic predecessor, Schiboulete, who is described by LADJIMI-SEBAÏ (1997): *La femme en Afrique à l'époque romaine*, 358 as a 'commerçante à la ville' or door-to-door saleswoman.



indicates that they sold clothes for someone else and were not in their own employment.

## ENTERTAINERS

Every sort of public entertainment was to be found in the Roman African cities until the Arab conquest, as the remains of theatres and epigraphic or literary references attest.<sup>40</sup> Women as well as men played to the crowds and to more private audiences in a variety of ways, since patronage of performing artists, besides the more obvious public aspect of providing entertainment for the masses, also included the host's role as benefactor at his own dinner parties. Apuleius refers briefly to different kinds of theatre entertainment in the *Florida* [18]: mimes, comedies, tragedies, ropewalkers and jugglers amused the crowds. These art forms were rooted in Greek originals, and most entertainers, at least in the early years of Empire, were of non-Roman origin.<sup>41</sup> Most of them were also slaves or freed slaves, and usually persons of low social status. Sick (1999: 331-2) points out that the Romans also had a basic aversion to professions that served no 'useful' purpose and to professions that took money for such services. Of the type of earnings for any of these related professions in the African context we have no information. Some entertainers, if they were good, could earn well - in Rome of the 1<sup>st</sup> century BC one dancer named Dionysia was said to have made HS 200 000 [Cic., *Pro Sext. Rosc. Am.* 23 (he does not say over what period); Macr., *Saturn.* 3.14.13]. Our Roman African examples were probably not of this calibre, however.



FIGURE 9.2 FEMALE  
TAMBOURINE PLAYER,  
POSSIBLY ASHTARTE.  
4<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY BC CARTHAGE



FIGURE 9.3 FEMALE  
FLAUTIST FROM THE  
PUNIC PERIOD

A number of female musicians appear to have practised their art in Roman Africa and a variety of instruments is represented in the inscriptions, although the context in which they were played is not always clear:

SÉTIF (SITIFIS) [AE 1972, 715]  
[D(IIS)] M(ANIBUS) S(ACRUM) | DONATAE | TIMPANA | RIAE V(IXIT) [A(NNIS)] | CX[...]  
| B(ENE) [M(ERENTI)].  
Consecrated to the Manes. Donata, tambourine player, lived 110+ years... she was well deserving.

Donata was a popular African name, and the single name indicates that she was probably a slave. The *timpanaria* was a tambourine of Phrygian origin, and it is possible that Donata performed her art in a religious context. A number of terracotta figures holding or playing tambourines or flutes have been found in Carthaginian tombs from the 7<sup>th</sup> to the 3<sup>rd</sup> century BC (illustrated in Figures 9.2 and 9.3). The figurines have been identified with fertility cults, probably that of Astarte or Cybele (Ferron 1969). They are not unique to Africa but have also been found throughout the Mediterranean world (Ferron 1969: 13, 17, 19). Tambourines were also played in non-

<sup>40</sup> Christian distaste of bloodshed is said to have influenced the disappearance of most forms of public entertainment such as the *venationes* and gladiatorial contests, a situation which gave rise to the dominance of chariot racing by the end of the 3<sup>rd</sup> century AD. Any information on public entertainment ceases with the Arab conquests of the 7<sup>th</sup> century (Potter 1999: 275).

<sup>41</sup> Greek performers were common in the theatre in Rome [Juv. 3.86-108].



religious contexts. Quodvultdeus mentions them in the context of other instruments without reference to pagan ritual [*Lib. de Prom.: Gloria Sanctorum* 18.4]. Another woman is simply commemorated as a musician, with no indication of her particular instrument:

GAUSA (CAPSA)

D(IS) M(ANIBUS) S(ACRUM) AELIA SATUR | NINA MUSICA(RIA) | VIX(IT) ANNIS XXII | ET M(ENSIBUS) DUOBUS. [CIL 126]

Consecrated to the souls of the departed. The musician Aelia Saturnina lived 22 years and two months.

By her Roman names it would appear that she was either a freeborn or a freedwoman, but not a slave, and as such may have had to earn her own living. This may mean that she played instruments on demand. Possibly, like the woman in the mosaic in Figure 9.4 with her modish Flavian hairstyle, she may even have played a water organ. This organ player seems in no way disturbed by the fact that she and her musical group are accompanying a variety of circus



FIGURE 9.4 FEMALE ORGAN PLAYER. PART OF A GROUP PLAYING AT THE CIRCUS

entertainments, including in order of presentation a gladiator contest, animal hunts and lastly the execution of prisoners bound to stakes and pushed towards leopards and a lion.<sup>42</sup> All the instruments shown in the band - trumpeter, hornplayers and organ - are probably chosen for their loud volume so that they could be heard above the screams of the dying, if not above the crowd. The harp was another musical instrument played by women professionally, presumably in a quieter environment:

SIDI ALI BEL KASSEM (THUBURNICUM)

D(IS) M(ANIBUS) S(ACRUM) MAMILIA RUFIL | [L]A SAMBUC(ISTRIA) PIA | VIXIT ANNIS LXXX [CIL 25745]

Consecrated to the souls of the departed. Mamilia Rufilla, pious harp player, she lived 80 years.

Luxorius [*Epigr.* 75 and 76] writing during the Vandal reign twice mentions a cymbalist named Gattula, whose most memorable attributes seem to have been that she danced, played her cymbals and gave gifts to persuade lovers to her bed. Dancing has a long history as entertainment. The mosaic from Carthage in Figure 9.5 illustrated overleaf, dating from the middle of the 4<sup>th</sup> century, shows a banqueting scene where all the banqueters are seated/reclining at long tables on which food and drink are set out. In the centre Dunbabin (1978: 124) identifies dancing girls (presumably slaves) with *krotala* (akin to castanets), an old man playing the pipes to their right and a group of jugglers in the centre bottom left, as entertainment for the guests. Regarding the overall meaning of the mosaic Dunbabin states: 'It is tempting to see it, by analogy with the amphitheatre mosaics, as the record of an *epulum* given by the owner of the house to his fellow-citizens, which he has chosen to record in perpetuity' (1978: 124). If Dunbabin is correct, the women here are performing in a semi-private capacity for select guests rather than in a public theatre. In wealthy households such dancers could be privately owned, and we have evidence for this in another instance:

<sup>42</sup> The entire mosaic can be seen in DUNBABIN (1999): *Mosaics of the Greek and Roman world*, 120-121.



CARTHAGO

[CIL 12925; ILS 5269]

THYAS SALTATRIX | METILIAE RUFINIAE VIXIT ANNIS XIII | THALAMUS SPONSAE SUAE  
Thyas, a tumbler/dancer of Metilia Rufina, lived 14 years. Thalamus for his fiancée.

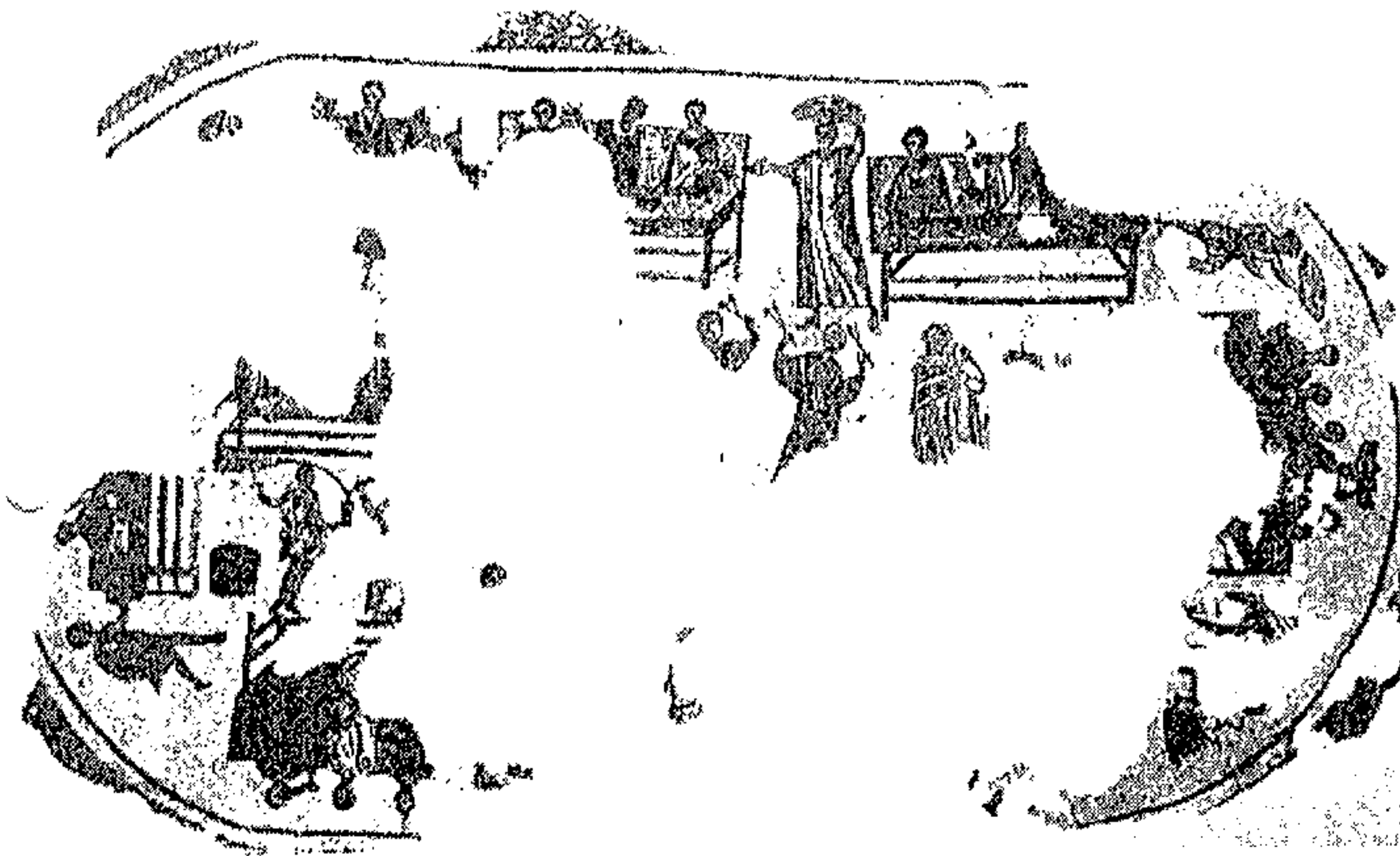


FIGURE 9.5 DANCERS, CENTRE

The owner of Thyas the tumbler is also a woman, Metilia Rufina. Thyas' theatrical accomplishments would have made her more valuable to her owner. Sick (1999: 345-6) suggests that 'the social stigma placed on the professions of the entertainment industry may have presented an opportunity for women such as Ummidia [the owner of slaves who performed pantomimes in

Rome] in a field with which conservative upper-class men did not want to be associated directly'. The evidence suggests that such female performers were often quite young, and it is likely that young slaves were apprenticed or even followed their parents in this profession.<sup>43</sup> Thyas could already be remembered by her profession when she died at the age of 14.

It is entirely possible that Carthage also had female gladiators.<sup>44</sup> Dunbabin (1978: 75) suggests that the context of an Amazon mosaic (found among the other amphitheatre mosaics) at the Maison des Atruches at Sousse makes it 'unlikely that this is intended simply as a mythological illustration' and that 'it is not impossible that there was an association called the Amazonii or something along those lines', possibly connected to the games.

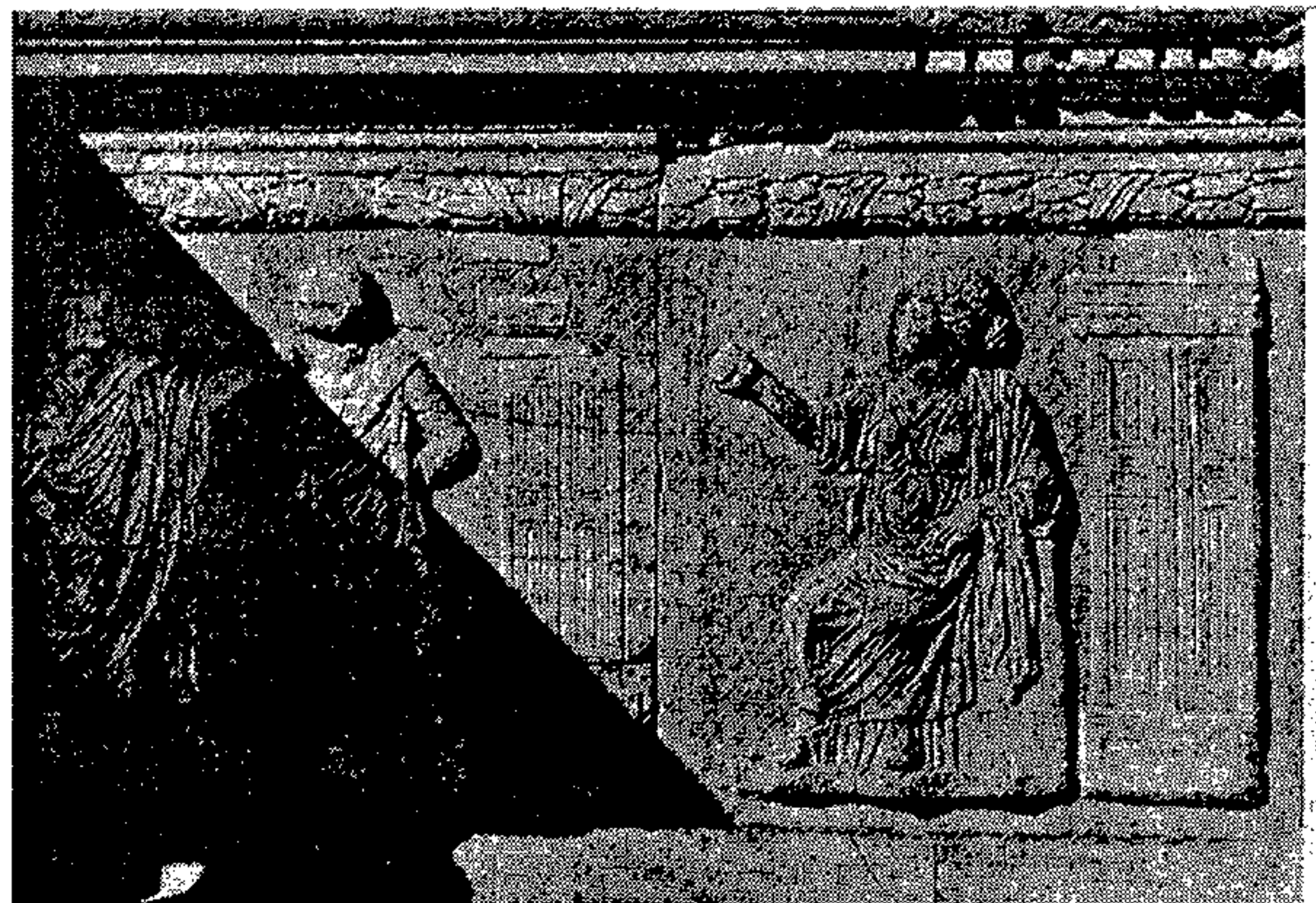


FIGURE 9.6 ROMAN THEATRE RELIEF FROM SABRATHA

Tragedies and comedies were performed on Roman African stages. A number of actors in these genres are evidenced from African inscriptions [ILAlg II 819 and 822, at Cirta]. According to Gardner (1986a: 246) 'women did not appear on the 'legitimate' stage', and the '*matrona*' shown in Figure 9.6 was probably played by a man. This is also indicated by the fact that the '*matrona*' sits on the edge of her seat with splayed legs, probably as part of the comic effect which made fun of what was in reality a rather austere figure of Roman

<sup>43</sup> For example, Phoebe Vocontia [ILS 5262], an *embolaria* from Rome, was only 12 when she died.

<sup>44</sup> A relief of such female gladiators from Halicarnassus is illustrated in VERMEULE (2000): 'Livia to Helena', 24, figure 1.6.



female authority.<sup>45</sup>

But although we have no visual presentation of it, it is the mime (dramatic sketch by actors accompanied by music) and pantomime or *fabulae salticae* (mythological ballet accompanied by a choir) which seem to be mentioned most often in literature as stage entertainment, and which gained popularity throughout the Roman world. These performances were often sponsored by the wealthy.<sup>46</sup> In the *Metamorphoses* Apuleius devotes several chapters to describing various mime acts in which both men and women performed, most of which has lewd overtones, with the finale performed by Lucius as an ass and a 'influential and wealthy lady' (*matrona pollens et opulens*) [10.29-34].<sup>47</sup> Before one puts this interlude aside as mere novelistic voyeurism, we may turn to Augustine for corroboration of such performances. Augustine saw crowds gathered before the temple of Juno Caelestis where a mime was being performed in her honour [*De Civ. Dei* 2.26]. He does not specify any of the acts, but bestiality in the manner of the Lucius tale is implied.<sup>48</sup>

Christianity certainly seems to have had limited effect on the availability of such entertainment to the man in the street. In fact we as modern readers only become aware of their nature through the railings of moralists such as satirists, or Stoic and Christian writers which provide details which other writers clearly found too banal to comment on. Quodvultdeus in the 5<sup>th</sup> century still preached against the sorts of entertainment we find at the beginning of the Roman period, so it is to be doubted that their words were having much effect. His description includes mimes depicting rape, probably in a mythical reneactment [*Lib. de Prom.: De Symbolo* 1.2 and *De Tempore Barbario* 1.1.11; 1.3. 19]. In his sermons Quodvultdeus finds substitutes for this popular entertainment by telling dramatic Biblical tales, for example of Moses pursued by chariots submerged in the Red Sea [*Lib. de Prom.: Gloria Sanctorum* 16], but clearly, as Clover (1978: 12) points out, public entertainment was appealing even for Christians. The Vandal occupation did not diminish the popular taste for such entertainment, despite Salvian's praise for their austere Arian Christianity. In fact, Procopius tells us, the Vandal conquerors took to Roman African entertainment with enthusiasm:

καὶ σφίσιν ὀρχησταὶ καὶ μῖμοι ἀκούσματά τε συχνὰ καὶ θεάματα ἦν ὅσα μουσικά τε καὶ ἄλλως ἀξιοθέατα  
ξυμβαίνει ἐν ἀνθρώποις εἶναι.

And they had dancers and mimes and all other things to hear and see which are of a musical nature or otherwise  
merit attention among people.

[*De Bell. Vand.* 4.6.8]

In this context Luxorius, whose reminiscences of popular amusement all focus on the bizarre elements of the entertainers, speaks of one Macedonia, a dwarf, who danced the story of Helen and Andromache (who were apparently tall women) in pantomime [*Epigr.* 24].

Traditionally there was a good deal of Roman class prejudice towards professions in entertainment, which were associated generally with untrustworthiness and a lack of morals. Such prejudices were clearly operative in

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<sup>45</sup> Sculptures of goddesses such as Cybele are portrayed with legs slightly apart but they sit well back on their throne in a position of dignity, legs decorously symmetrical and feet squared to the statue as a whole. They are not portrayed about to slip off the edge of the seat with legs and feet splayed.

<sup>46</sup> For example freedmen who appear to have been performers at the court of Juba II are found in inscriptions [*CIL* 9344 *passim*] and outside Africa [*CIL* VI 10110 = *ILS* 5216].

<sup>47</sup> For a discussion of pantomime in the *Metamorphoses* see FINKELPEARL (1991): 'The judgement of Lucius', 226-231.

<sup>48</sup> Arnobius also mentions that in the mimes which were part of the Floralia, an exodus from the brothels to the theatres was sometimes played on stage [*Adv. Nat.* 7.33]. Prostitution was also for example associated with the worship of Isis, and her temples, which were themselves meeting places for prostitutes, were often situated near brothels (Pomeroy 1975: 222).



Roman Africa as well, to judge from the court speech of Apuleius [*Apol.* 74]. Here Herennius Rufus is alleged to have been a pantomime actor which 'allows a special class of abuse' (Harrison 2000: 78) in which his morals - and that of the women associated with him - are generally censured. For women entertainers in particular it was assumed that because they were on public display, they were available as sexual partners. Charanis (1973b: 61) takes this for granted when he mentions that in Byzantium 'we may include the actresses and the women who worked in taverns' under the definition of prostitution.<sup>49</sup> Actresses in Byzantium were usually performers of mimes and conveyed to their audience that they were prepared to perform in a more intimate setting for the right fee.<sup>50</sup> Arnobius' disapproving description of public entertainment makes this association quite clear:

*Idcirco animas misit, ut res sancti atque augustissimi nominis symphonicas agerent et fistulatorias hic artes, ut inflandis bucculas distenderent tibiis, canctionibus ut praeirent obscenis, numerosos ut cierent scabillorum concrepationibus sonores, quibus animarum alia lasciviens multitudo incompositos corporum dissolveretur in motus, saltitaret et cantaret, orbes saltatorios verteret et ad ultimum clunibus et coxendicibus sublevatis lumborum crispitudine fluctuaret? ..... ut in maribus exsoleti, in feminis fierent meretrices sambucistriae psaltriae, venalia ut prosternerent corpora, vilitatem sui populo publicarent in lupanaribus promptae, in fornicibus obviae, nihil pati remventes et ad oris aere comparatae constuprationem.*

Did He send the souls so that beings of a holy and most noble race should ... raise a din by the rhythmic shakings of the castanets by which numbers of other souls should want to give themselves up to bizarre motions of their bodies, dance, sing, jump around in circles, and, finally raising their haunches and hips, should sway with the rippling motion of their loins?... so that women [become] harlots, sambucists, harpists, that they let their bodies for hire; that they make their vileness public property, ready in the brothels, to be met with in the archways, willing to submit to anything, even ready for the defilement of their sacred mouth? [*Adv. Nat.* 2.42]

In the epigram featuring Gattula the musician and dancer mentioned above,<sup>51</sup> Luxorius' satire is aimed at the fact that Gattula, who as a performer is the equivalent of a prostitute, is so hideous that she has to pay lovers with gifts to bed her, rather than the other way round. Tertullian also reflects this automatic association of actresses with prostitution:

*Ipsa etiam prostibulae, publicae libidinis hostiae, in scaena proferuntur, plus miserae in praesentia feminarum, quibus solis latebant, perque omnis aetatis, omnis dignitatis ora transducuntur.*

The very prostitutes, the victims of public lust, are produced on stage, more unhappy in the presence of other women - the only class in the community whose notice they escape; they are paraded before the faces of every rank and age... [*De Spect.* 17]

But prostitution remained a viable trade even in the days when the Church was most influential. The existence of brothels in Roman African cities hardly needs to be questioned, although evidence is limited and the references are random, dating from all periods under discussion. Brothels could either be privately owned or run by the city. A brothel was for example found in Thugga, identified as the House of the Trifolium. It had a colonnaded court and cubicles leading off it for the prostitutes and their clients (Manton 1988: 115).<sup>52</sup> This

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<sup>49</sup> The juristic definition of the prostitute is given by Ulpian: *Dig.* 23.2.43 pr. 5. Here we may understand the bartering of sexual favours for money.

<sup>50</sup> Much of the material on prostitutes and actresses in Byzantium is derived from Procopius' references to Theodora, the wife of the emperor Justinian, in the *Anekdotia*. Theodora was the daughter of a bear leader in the circus and had been an actress, dancer and prostitute.

<sup>51</sup> See p. 202.

<sup>52</sup> SALAMA (1981): 'The Sahara in Classical Antiquity', 528-529, mentions that Roman coins (or possibly tokens) called 'spintrians' were struck for the use of courtesans. The word 'spintrian' is related to the Greek σφικτήρ (referring to the anal muscle) and sometimes used to denote male prostitutes (*L & S* 'spintria'). 'Courtesans' rather misleadingly implies women. The coins were stamped with the image of a camel, since the Romans believed that these animals were exceptionally lascivious. I was unable to find another reference to these coins. Temple prostitution is also a possibility up to the end of the 1<sup>st</sup> century AD (see further discussion in Chapter 12, pp. 279-280).



type of establishment must have housed high-class prostitutes, since it is evidently more organized than the *cellae metricae* which opened out to the streets in Pompeii, for example, and were rented out from the owners of the houses onto which they backed (Scobie 1986: 403 n.38).

In the ancient novel being sold into prostitution is usually depicted as an unfortunate fate.<sup>53</sup> When Charite is faced with this prospect in the *Metamorphoses* [7.9-10] she greets this proposal jubilantly only because it is made to her kidnappers by her disguised betrothed, Tleptolemus. While we must make allowances for the dramatic element of the novel, kidnapping and enslavement could very well bring a woman or a man to this end, and in Augustine's day seemed to be a very real danger. In one of his letters Augustine relates how gangs of thugs kidnapped men and women to sell them as slaves across the Mediterranean [*Ep.* 10.2-3]. Another example of this kind of activity was a local woman of Hippo, who lured women from Gidda on the pretext of buying wood, locked them up and beat them, and later sold them as slaves [*Ep.* 10.6]. Such a captive may very well have ended up in a brothel. Other sources for populating brothels were the same as for the rest of the ancient world: exposed children [*Tert., Apologet.* 9]<sup>54</sup> or women sold by their parents or husbands. The skeleton of a woman of about 40 years of age dating to the late 4<sup>th</sup> century AD was found buried in the forum at Bulla Regia still bearing a lead collar with the following inscription:

ADULTERA MERETRIX, TENE QUIA FUGITIVI DE BULLA R(E)G(IA)  
I am an adulteress, a courtesan, hold on to me, for I am a runaway slave from Bulla Regia.<sup>55</sup>

[AE 1906, 148]

The lead collar and inscription imply some form of punishment. Since no master is named here the woman was possibly the property of the city of Bulla Regia at a municipal *lupanar* or brothel (Soren *et al* 1990: 185). The short text does not bring to mind a happy end for this woman, but doubtlessly this depended on individual treatment. Prostitutes in brothels may have received medical attention from doctors. An epigram by Luxorius [*Epigr.* 16] places a doctor spending a lot of time there. When Luxorius seeks an explanation for this, however, he ascribes the doctor's presence in the brothel to the voyeurism of the homosexual. Lassère (1977: 553 n.120) comments that prostitutes ('femmes de mauvaise vie') do not appear to have been properly controlled, at least in Carthage, since a number of them seem to have suffered from syphilis, but this is not very surprising given similar problems of more modern times.

Socially prostitutes must have been easily recognizable since they wore the plain toga<sup>56</sup> (which was also the form of dress for women caught in adultery) over brightly coloured or diaphanous tunics, and they reputedly had a heavy hand with cosmetics.<sup>57</sup> Too much adornment of the face and body for ordinary women brought down the

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<sup>53</sup> For example see Xenophon of Ephesus, *Ephesiaca* 5.6-8.

<sup>54</sup> A law issued by Constantine in 322 [*Cod. Theod.* 11.27.2] specifically tried to deal with the practice of selling children that was occurring in Africa, apparently as a result of a famine. Local officials were instructed to provide food from the imperial stocks. Ironically the new tax levied to cover these costs forced many parents to sell their children to be able to pay it [*Zos., Hist. Nova* 2.38.3] (Nathan 2000: 66).

<sup>55</sup> BEN ABED BEN KHADER AND SOREN (1987): *Carthage: a mosaic of ancient Tunisia*, 229-230.

<sup>56</sup> The exact reason for this is obscure, but the argument that it was an indication that a woman had given up her status and role as a sexually mature woman in Roman society (Sebesta 1994: 50) is more convincing than the one which holds that women were seen to behave like men in their sexual promiscuity (Heskel 1994: 141). GARDNER (1986a): *Women in Roman law and society*, 252, finds no evidence that prostitutes were required to wear the toga: 'It would hardly seem necessary to compel prostitutes to adopt a style of dress different from that of other women. After all, it pays to advertise'.

<sup>57</sup> See the portrait which Apuleius presents of Rufinus' daughter as the equivalent of a prostitute [*Apol.* 76].



condemnation of the moralists like Tertullian and Augustine, who likened such behaviour to that of prostitutes,<sup>58</sup> from which we can infer that prostitutes used these means to attract men.

Christian teaching attempted to encourage women to give up this livelihood for centuries, but during the 5<sup>th</sup> century Salvian in his moral diatribe against Carthage claimed that men still visited brothels [*De Gub. Dei* 7.67], where as Christians they should not have been doing so. For this reason, Salvian claims, the Vandals made prostitutes marry and punished adultery by men and women alike.<sup>59</sup> If Roman law had been in force during this period, presumably these marriages would have been to freedmen since by the *lex Iulia Papia* it was illegal for actresses and prostitutes to marry freeborn citizens before Justinian's new laws.<sup>60</sup> But since prostitution seems to have been foreign to Germanic tradition, it is likely that the Vandals saw no impediment to such marriages.

### **WOMEN AS TAVERN KEEPERS**<sup>61</sup>

A number of women are attested in this area of commerce from across the Roman Empire, most of them bearing only one name, indicating either that they were slaves or freedwomen (Gardner 1986a: 249). It is generally supposed that such women were *sui iuris* or capable of owning property (Gardner 1986a: 249), but it is of course also possible that they were just managers of the tavern. Apuleius' *Metamorphoses* has two examples of women who ran or owned taverns: Meroë (*cauponam Meroen*),<sup>62</sup> described as old but attractive (*anum sed admodum scitulam*) [1.7], and an old lady innkeeper (*anu caupona*) [1.21]. The former is depicted as an evil menace, sexually voracious and a witch, while the latter is only a humble woman who supplies Lucius with a little gossip about the household of Milo which he is about to visit. While the sexual appetites of Meroë are probably exaggerated to serve the purposes of the novel, according to Ulpian [*Dig.* 23.2.43.1-5, 9] many women hired other women to work in taverns but in fact employed them as prostitutes. As Charanis quoted above indicates, women who worked as actresses and in taverns were considered to be openly selling themselves since they were available to all men indiscriminately (Gardner 1986a: 132). This view is supported by Roman law: women who had been sold as slaves subject to the condition that they would not be made to work as prostitutes were forbidden to work in taverns by an edict of the emperor Severus Alexander [*Cod. Theod.* 4.56.3].

### **CULINARY SKILLS AND BUSINESS**

In Roman antiquity the preparation of food was another task normally undertaken by men, usually domestic slaves. The elaborate feast described in the *Metamorphoses* [2.19] would have needed experienced kitchen personnel such as that described by Arnobius [*Adv. Nat.* 2.42], who knew how to catch dripping fat, make

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<sup>58</sup> There are numerous instances of this type of rhetoric, for example: Tertullian, *De Cult. Fem.* 1.4; Cyprian, *De Hab. Virg.* 14; Aug., *De Doctr. Chr.* 4.21.49 and *De Bono Vid.* 19.24.

<sup>59</sup> By law [*Cod. Theod.* 15.7] actresses and their daughters could only leave their profession if they converted to Christianity (Clark 1993: 29). In Constantinople Theodora attempted to rehabilitate prostitutes, although according to Procopius this benevolence had many of them climbing over the walls to escape it.

<sup>60</sup> Justinian abolished a law which would have prohibited the marriage of persons of Theodora's status [*Nov. Iust.* 6, AD 542].

<sup>61</sup> Discussion of stereotypes in this role: MOINE (1975): 'Augustin et Apulée sur les magie des femmes d'auberge'.

<sup>62</sup> Meroë is the name of a town and region in the upper Nile area, but *merum* also means 'strong wine' (commentary to the Loeb edition, 17 n.1), a suitable name for a tavern owner.



twisted cakes and iced sausages.<sup>63</sup> Roman Africa has one inscription mentioning a woman's involvement possibly in a more commercial context:

CARTHAGO

[CIL 24678]

L(UCIUS) ATILIUS L(UCI) L(IBERTUS) HIERO FURNARI(US) | VALERIA G(AIAE) L(IBERTA) EUTERPE FURNARIA |  
VIVIT C(AIUS) VALERIUS C(AI) L(IBERTUS) DIONISIUS TRIARI(US) | VIVIT.

Lucius Atilius, freedman of Lucius Hieron, baker. Valeria Euterpe, freedwoman of Gaia, baker, lived (?). Gaius Valerius Dionisius Triarius, freedman of Gaius, lived (?).

The above inscription testifies to a husband and wife who were either cooks or bakers, and who probably learned their trade while enslaved. Such specially trained or talented slaves were valued and this couple were probably soon in a position to buy their own freedom.

## WOMEN'S OTHER ENTERPRISES AND BUSINESS SKILLS

Women's financial capabilities are already attested from inscriptions found in Pompeii from the 1<sup>st</sup> century AD: women feature as moneylenders, as businesswomen renting out apartments, shops and baths existed.<sup>64</sup> Our information about women in the world of trade and business is undoubtedly less than what it must have been in reality. Looking after the household goods could lead to all kinds of money-making activities, from small trade for example in fabric or cakes and wines, to buying and selling property.<sup>65</sup> In many cases this may have made the transition to profitable enterprise easier, and it was most likely that women would operate in these areas. A woman named Capitolina is mentioned by Apuleius, who says that he bought some ebony tablets from her (which he then took to the shop of the craftsman Cornelius Saturninus) [*Apol.* 61.7]. In addition, the young man in court who is to testify on Capitolina's behalf is simply referred to as 'her' son [*Apol.* 62.1] - there is no mention of a father to complete his identity. It may very well be that some of the women who were in trade did so for survival after their spouses had died, or had deserted them. In other instances women may have worked beside their husbands. Only occasionally do we get a glimpse of this type of partnership, such as in the following inscription dated to the late 2<sup>nd</sup> or early 3<sup>rd</sup> century AD:

SOMET EL AMRA (NEAR GAFSA)

[CIL 152; ILT 297; CLE 516]

URBANILLA MIHI CONIUNX VERECUNDIA PLENA HIC SITA EST | ROMAE COMES NEGOTIORUM SOCIA  
PARCIMONIO FULTA | BENE GESTIS OMNIBUS CUM IN PATRIA MECUM REDIRET | AU MISERAM  
CARTHAGO MIHI ERIPUIT SOCIAM | NULLA SPES VIVENDI MIHI SINE CONIUGE TALI | ILLA DOMUM  
SERVARE MEAM ET CONSILIO IUVARE | LUCE PRIVATA MISERA QUESCIT IN MARMORE CLUSA |  
LUCIUS EGO CONIUNX HIC TE MARMORE TEXI | ANC NOBIS SORTE DEDIT FATU CUM LUCI DAREMUR

Here lies my wife Urbanilla, full of modesty, at Rome companion and partner in my business, rooted in parsimony. When all our business had been successfully concluded and she was returning to our fatherland with me, ah, Carthage snatched my unhappy partner from me. I have no hope of living without such a wife. She kept my house, she helped me with her advice. Deprived of light, unhappy, she rests closed in marble. I, your husband Lucius, have covered you here in marble. This is the lot which fate gives us when we are brought into the world.

(translation adapted from Treggiari 1991a: 244)

It would appear that Urbanilla was involved in her husband's business venture in Rome, even though both were based in Africa. It is difficult to imagine exactly what this business could have been. The travel between Africa and Rome would imply some sort of commercial venture, and such enterprise by women is also found in Roman

<sup>63</sup> Tertullian is rather critical of the amount of money spent on such repasts and expresses regret for past laws which restricted meals to 100 asses and to one unfattened fowl on the table [*Apologet.* 6.2].

<sup>64</sup> Faustilla signed notes as a moneylender; Julia Felix owned buildings in which she rented out apartments, shops and baths; Eumachia had extensive business interests and was rewarded with a statue of herself as priestess for subsidies to public buildings in Pompeii.

<sup>65</sup> 'It might not be proper for a woman to go out and make a profit, but her traditional role as guardian of the household property could supply plenty of financial experience.' (Clark 1993: 61). Compare for example John Chrysostom [*De Non Iter. Coniug.* 4, PG 48.615]



Egypt (Hobson 1983). The location of their home town in Byzacene also makes trade with Rome a viable prospect for this period.<sup>66</sup> In local commerce caravan routes transporting goods to the coast were a regular occurrence, and Garnsey (1978: 236) is probably correct in saying that the Romans were not fiercely intent on forcing a sedentary mode of existence since they too profited from the caravans which brought products from the interior to the ports. The *via de camellos* referred to in the *Tablettes Albertini* [3] was possibly the route taken out of the eastern Sahara (Shaw 1979: 699). Caravan routes to the west ended at Azemmour (about 80 kilometers to the south of Casablanca). Queen Tin Hinan of the Garamantes, the legendary ancestress of the Tuaregs, was possibly linked to the Garamantean trade monopoly in the Fezzān. The Garamantes had become a client state after military conflicts with the Roman forces under Cornelius Balbus in 19 BC and under Valerius Festus in AD 69.

## WORKSHOPS EMPLOYING WOMEN

Workshops are attested across the Roman Empire, and some of them necessitated hard physical labour. Apuleius mentions slaves working in a flour mill in the *Metamorphoses* [9.12] under less than ideal conditions, and gold, silver and copper workshops are also mentioned in connection with the estates of Melania at Thagaste (Clark edition of the text 1984: 190). The gender of those working in such workshops is not specified in the African evidence, but we may bear in mind Clark's observation (1993: 56-57) regarding the inconsistent invocation of the belief that women were weaker in terms of physical strength, emotional nature, lack of education and experience and needed protection,<sup>67</sup> while at the same time they were condemned to working for example in the imperial woollen mills or subjected to the full physical penalties of Roman law.

## RURAL LABOUR

The greatest problem of evidence is experienced in the anonymous area of rural labour, and we may count ourselves as fortunate to possess a few items of evidence from Roman Africa in this field.<sup>68</sup> Scheidel (1995) explains this difficulty as stemming from Graeco-Roman ideology, which made working out of doors and in the fields the man's role, while indoor work such as spinning and weaving that of women.<sup>69</sup> This ideology, according to Scheidel's collection of the ancient evidence and inferences from cross-cultural comparisons, has not always been a reflection of actual reality in these Mediterranean cultures. Firstly, only Greeks and Romans of some financial standing would have been able to afford keeping their wives and daughters from toil, a small minority of the actual population with which most of this study is otherwise concerned. The financial constraints of the majority would have had their women working either as cheap labour on their own land, or

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<sup>66</sup> Other areas lost access to overseas markets as the African provinces shrank in territory. The absence of identifiable pottery in the rural areas of Mauretania, for example, indicates a gradual isolation from the market economy already during the 4<sup>th</sup> century AD (Brett and Fentress 1996: 60).

<sup>67</sup> See for example the study by BEAUCAMP (1976): 'Le vocabulaire de la faiblesse féminine' on the terms *infirmetas* and *fragilitas* applied to women in legal sources.

<sup>68</sup> Roman contempt for working in the fields is amply illustrated by Apuleius' description of his court opponent Aemilianus, who is depicted as a man tilling his own field with his single ass. See also Cicero: *inliberali labore* [ *De Fin. Bon. et Mal.* 1.3].

<sup>69</sup> See for example Columella's 1<sup>st</sup> century writings on Roman agriculture and the division of labour put the woman in the house and the man in the fields [ *De Re Rust.* 12]. Roman sources in particular stress the connection between textile production and women remaining indoors (Scheidel 1996a: 206).



would have sent them out to work for others. This explains the general views which transpire from Scheidel's study of women as farm labour, who are portrayed as poor, old and weak (1996a: 4). The view of women in indigenous African traditions as extra fieldhands has already been mentioned in Chapter 3.<sup>70</sup> Nevertheless it is more likely that on farms women would have been more concerned with storing and preparing food and looking after farmyard animals - we have no evidence at all that men performed these tasks around the house. The role of slave labour in this context is also relevant.<sup>71</sup> Generally there is a direct correlation between the size of the agricultural holding and the workforce - larger estates were usually worked by slaves or hired labourers,<sup>72</sup> while smaller farms owned by a single family could require input from everyone in it. From the *Apologia* [17; 93] we can deduce that agricultural slave labour was used in Tripolitania around the middle of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century AD, and this is possibly also the case on the *fundus Cornelianus*, the estate of an African woman who 'legated it with all *instrumenta* including both *mancipia* and *reliqua colonorum*' [Dig. 33.7.27.1] (Garnsey 1978: 237).<sup>73</sup> Agricultural slave labour need not necessarily imply only male slaves working in the fields,<sup>74</sup> but there is no definite evidence that female slaves were used to work the lands in Roman Africa.

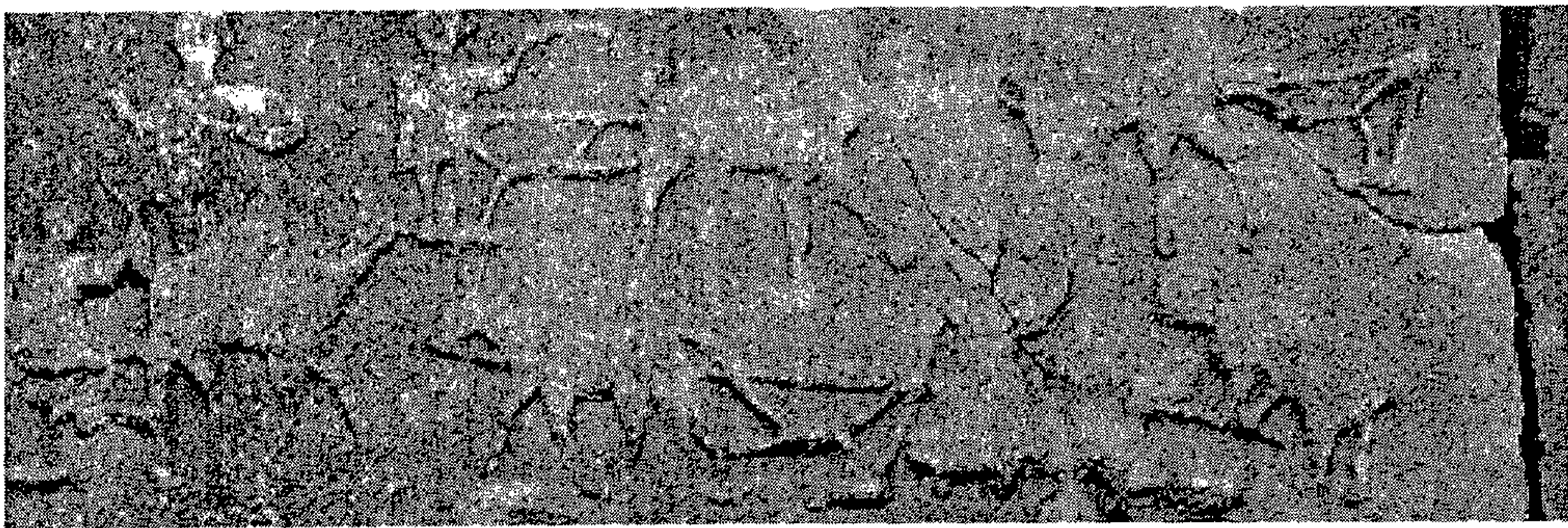


FIGURE 9.7 PLOUGHING AND SOWING SCENE FROM A TOMB AT GHIRZA

The nomadic elements in North Africa also contributed seasonal hired labour. The peasant of Mactaris [CIL 11824] found their annual migrations to employment in the fields around Cirta or on the plains of Tunisia to be a signal that he should start to make preparations to harvest his own crop (Garnsey 1978: 233). Again, given the professed attitude of Africans to using their many wives as fieldhands, we can plausibly assume that women

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<sup>70</sup> See p. 51.

<sup>71</sup> On slave labour in Roman Africa see PAVIS D'ESCURAC (1974): 'Pour une étude sociale de l'Apologie de Apulée', 92; GUTSFELD (1992): 'Zur Wirtschaftsmentalität nichtsenatorischer provinzieller Oberschichten', 253-4; GARNSEY AND SALLER (1987): *The Roman Empire: economy, society and culture*, 111; KEHOE (1988): *The economics of agriculture on Roman imperial estates in North Africa*, 24-5.

<sup>72</sup> Such slave families may not necessarily have been as badly off as the infamous example of Cato's agricultural workforce, who were to be sold when they were no longer capable of hard labour [Plut., *Cato* 4.4]. According to *Codex Theodosianus* [2.25.1] (possibly AD 325 or 334), in Sardinia, Corsica and Sicily the sale of imperial lands was to be arranged in such a way that slave families would not be broken up (Nathan 2000: 71).

<sup>73</sup> GARNSEY (1978): 'Rome's African empire', 237, speculates that this may have been part of a Punic inheritance in a heavily Punic area, particularly when contrasted to other areas of the African provinces where tenant labour seems to have been more common.

<sup>74</sup> Columella writes that if slave women could not work because of rainy weather or frost they should be put to work indoors [*De Re Rust.* 12.3.6], clearly indicating that normally they did work in the fields.





FIGURE 9.8 PEASANTS IN THE FIELD

hoeing (see Figure 9.8 below), harvesting, weeding, milking or dealing with young animals. Men are portrayed in tasks which require an upright posture: ploughing, using the scythe, fishing or hunting. African traditions clearly used different standards in this regard. During the Byzantine period Berber women were still responsible for the domestic labour, from building the huts to looking after the animals [Cor., *Ioh.* 4.1076-1077], a role in which she was, according to Diehl, little better than a servant (1944, I: 310).

The assessment of Scheidel (1996a: 8), that 'Rural working women were banned from Roman reliefs and mosaics', does not hold true for Roman Africa. In fact Scheidel tacitly admits the exaggeration a few sentences later: 'Under these circumstances, something as unspectacular as a mosaic from Carthage that shows a woman who carried a cask of black olives and another one who carries a lamb has considerable rarity value'.<sup>76</sup> In neighbouring Egypt there is some evidence of women who earned wages carrying olives at the oil press (Gardner 1986: 244). To these two examples a mosaic from Zliten can be added, part of a larger collage, depicting peasants in the field. The woman on the left in Figure 9.8 appears to be instructing the other women. She is differentiated from the rest by the fact that she wears a white veil. Two women bending down in the act of hoeing in front of her, while in the background another

formed part of this agricultural workforce, particularly at harvest time.

In most parts of Roman Africa, however, much of the farming was done by *coloni* and not by slaves (Barker *et al* 1996: 323).<sup>75</sup> Indigenous traditions show women as well as men in farming activities, as indicated by the illustration (Figure 9.7) above. Here the majority of the workers are male. One female figure (identified by her long pleated skirt) is ploughing, while the man behind her appears to be breaking clods of earth. In Graeco-Roman culture, women, according to Scheidel (1995: 212), are usually assistants, and the tasks which they perform emphasize their subordinate role - they are more often than not those which require bending:



FIGURE 9.9 THRESHING SCENE

<sup>75</sup> This is at least suggested by the fact that the survival of slave names is significantly lower in Roman Africa - less than 1% of all inscriptions - than for example in Roman Spain (Garnsey 1980: 78). Further epigraphical evidence is discussed by CARLSEN (1991): 'Estate management in Roman North Africa', 637.

<sup>76</sup> SCHEIDEL (1996a): 'The most silent women of Greece and Rome: rural labour and women's life in the ancient world' gives no reference for this but is presumably referring to the Julius mosaic (illustrated in Figures 11.4 and 11.5).



woman is using a hoe. Perhaps the veiled woman is the wife of the turbaned man pictured in the accompanying panel on the right (Figure 9.9). They could even be the *vilicus* and the *vilica*, husband and wife managers of the estate in the absence of their employers, especially in view of the fact that they are both distinguished by their dress and lack of implements from the other figures which are engaged in the actual labour.

In the foreground of the mosaic on the left infants are playing among themselves. According to Scheidel (1995: 204-205) there is a correlation between the amount of field work done by women and the quality of childcare. We may also note the convention that the women are engaged in activity quite close to the house shown on the right, whereas the men in the mosaic on the right are some distance from it.

The figures depicted in the mosaic of Figure 9.8 are probably *coloni*, since on larger estates with a big workforce women would have been less likely to participate (Scheidel 1995: 210). But would any family have had quite so many women in it? The women depicted are not, as their male counterparts in Figure 9.9, shown as indigenous women. It is likely that the wives and daughters of the *coloni* may have helped each other out at different times of the year. Unfortunately we do not have enough information about what constituted common farming practice among these small farmers. The Julius mosaic illustrated in Figures 11.3 and 11.5 also features a number of modestly dressed women who were presumably the wives of *coloni*.<sup>77</sup>

## CONCLUSION

All these careers and functions for women receive little or no comment from ancient authors, from which one may conclude that their activities were acceptable in their own class, and probably that they were practised in a limited degree. An *obstetrix* such as Caelia Bonosa Mazica [CIL 15593] of Mustis is still described as a *marita castissima et pudicissima*. This may also be attributed to the fact that, judging by the nomenclature of these women (either Greek-derived or Latinized), none of them came from even the middle class. Most were either slaves or freedwomen, who may possibly have started their careers as slaves and bought their freedom from their earnings.

The women visually represented in Roman Africa are never (as far as we know) depicted by their own relatives but always as symbols of subordination by someone of higher status for whom they worked as slaves, or as peasant workers. This is not the case elsewhere in the Roman Empire, where tombstones often depict their functions with a measure of pride. We may conclude from this that these women never gained the limited affluence of others practicing the same profession elsewhere, and that in most cases these women originated from families in financially straitened circumstances who might not have been able to afford tombstones, or tombstones of durable quality.

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<sup>77</sup> See the discussion on pp. 248; 252.





## CHAPTER 10

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# FACTORS WHICH INFLUENCED AUTONOMY AND INDEPENDENCE FOR WOMEN

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Factors which counted for or against the autonomy and independence of Roman African women were rooted in the particular social attitudes already discussed, and these attitudes also sometimes found their expression in laws. Because most of our evidence is Romanized, it is Roman law and custom which carry the most weight here, while in the Late Empire Christianity also played a meaningful role in legal definitions of women's right to independence. It is these traditions which circumscribed Roman African women's right to ownership and disposal of property and to a public presence, both factors which in themselves limit the discussion to women of some means and status. This chapter therefore attempts to serve as a basis for the three chapters which follow, dealing with women as property owners, as investors and as benefactors, always with the *caveat* that legal rescripts are not necessarily a reflection of social reality.

### FEMALE VICTIMIZATION AND FEMALE INSURGENCE

Although Chapters 12 and 13 deal with women who emerged from the masses to claim some individual distinction as patronesses and sponsors of Roman African communities, it must be pointed out that these instances were the exception rather than the rule. Even for these women the larger part of their lives was circumscribed by conventions which limited their independence and individual prominence. For the overwhelming majority of women living in the Roman African context, conditions dictated an even more dependent role. In the first instance the fate of all women, regardless of status, was inextricably linked to that of the men in their family. When the poetry of Dracontius earned the displeasure of the Vandal king Gunthamund, Dracontius' wife was imprisoned along with her husband, regardless of her innocence. In the context of war women and children are the enemy's most precious possession, the future - or bearers of future - generations. Pagan or Christian, Roman or non-Roman, our sources display the same attitude regarding female captives in Africa, as demonstrated by the concluding sentence from an inscription of Silko, a 5<sup>th</sup> century Christian Nubian chieftain:<sup>1</sup> 'For those who offer resistance to me, I carry off their women and children' (οἱ γὰρ

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<sup>1</sup> On Silko's Christianity, see PAPADOPOULLOS (1966): *Africanobyzantina: Byzantine influences on Negro-Sudanese cultures*, 16.



ἀντίδικοί μου, ἄρπάζω τῶν γυναικῶν καὶ τὰ παιδιά αὐτῶν) [CIG III, 5072].<sup>2</sup> The fact that Roman women could eventually accompany their spouses to the provinces, usually seen as a relaxation of the *mores* which inhibited women,<sup>3</sup> made them more vulnerable to such attacks. When Belisarius arrived in Africa from Constantinople, he brought his wife, Antonina, to the war zone, but left her behind when he went out to battle [Procop., *De Bell. Vand.* 3.12.2-3; 3.19.11], and another Byzantine general, Areobindus, brought both his sister, Prejecta, and his wife, the daughter of Vigilantia, the sister of Justinian, when he came to Africa [*De Bell. Vand.* 4.24.3], although he was in due course to send both women to a monastery for safety [4.26.18].

The Mauri<sup>4</sup> regularly took some of their women into battle to make the stockades and tend the horses and camels [Procop., *De Bell. Vand.* 4.11.18], even though it appears from Procopius' account that one of their leaders, Cabaon, who ruled the native Africans of Tripolis, tried to toughen up his men by prohibiting luxury and any association with women, whom he had shut up in a separate camp [*De Bell. Vand.* 3.8.16].<sup>5</sup> But, as we have seen, the Mauri were (apparently) less concerned with their women ending up in the hands of the enemy than were the Romans.<sup>6</sup>

The frequency with which women are depicted by the ancient writers as the victims of war has become a *topos* in ancient literature - they are the vocal expression of a people's woe.<sup>7</sup> Their suffering makes a suitable subject to engender pathos for ancient writers, even when the women are not linked to the side which the author considers to be the justified party. In the *Iohannis* there are many images which dwell on woman and children as victims in times of war. In the following extract Corippus imagines the nightmares of the African soldiers on the night before battle:

*dum vitare parat violenti vulneris ictus  
coniugis excusso concussit vertice pectus.  
eripitur tunc illa magis. nam praedo superbus*

*crinibus abstractam silvis rapiebat ab ipsis  
sic sibi quisque videns quassantes pectora somnos  
horrebant.*

As a man made to avoid a deadly blow, he would strike the breast of his spouse whose head he pushed away. Then, what's more, she would be taken further away from him, for the haughty plunderer would drag her right out of the forest by her hair. And so, each one, seeing his own visions, was horrified by the sleep that shook his breast.

[*Ioh.* 2.481-486]

It may seem that, as a Romanized African, Corippus is giving an objectively humane view of the soldiers on either side of the war, where in fact this is just a literary opportunity to engender emotion. From the epic as a whole it clearly emerges that the Moorish women are the expression of 'the ultimate Other', the barbarian and

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<sup>2</sup> Text and translation in HENDRICKX (1984): *Official documents written in Greek illustrating the ancient history of Nubia and Ethiopia*, 75-6). See also the commentary in the *FHN* on Silko, pp. 1151-1153. The editors read ἀ[ν]τίσικοί μου, ἄρπάζω τῶν γυναικῶν καὶ τὰ παιδιά αὐτῶν, although in a footnote they note that ἀντίσικοί stands for ἀντίδικοί, and they translate 'for I rob my adversaries of their women and children'.

<sup>3</sup> See the discussion on p. 111; also Tacitus [*Ann.* 3.33-34].

<sup>4</sup> From Late Antiquity sources refer to all indigenous or non-Romanized tribes as 'Mauri', even though this term initially referred only to the western tribes of North Africa. See Chapter 2, p. 27.

<sup>5</sup> We may contrast this with other historical examples, particularly among the Germanic tribes, where women actually fought in battle, for example the Boudicca rebellion in AD 63. See also p. 54 above.

<sup>6</sup> As related at the end of Chapter 7, Procopius tells us that the Libyans were unconcerned with the lives of the hostages taken from them, since they each had enough wives to ensure descendants [*De Bell. Vand.* 4.13]. A low regard for women among the Mauri is already implied by Sallust [*Bell. Jug.* 80.6-7.], who refers scornfully to their practice of polygamy, where no one wife had the status accorded to a single partner. Political marriages were ineffective since every man could have as many wives as he could afford.

<sup>7</sup> Examples such as the following abound: *Tremulis ululatibus aethera matres concutiunt...* ('The tremulous howling of women struck the air...') [*Ioh.* 2.171-2].



an example of 'a way to describe Roman victory and, by opposition, Roman civilization' (Fantham *et al* 1994: 386). In a later passage he describes the Moorish women paraded as part of the spoils of war and the humiliation of the enemy:

*...captivas cernere Mauras  
ire iuvat, celsis inscripta fronte camelis  
ut pavidae sedeant parvosque sub ubere natos  
contineant. aliae geminis ambire lacertis*

*sarcinulas super et parvi cunabula lecti  
(heu miserae matres!) vultu maerente laborant.  
impia corda gemunt: miseris modo matribus Afris  
iam servire volunt.*

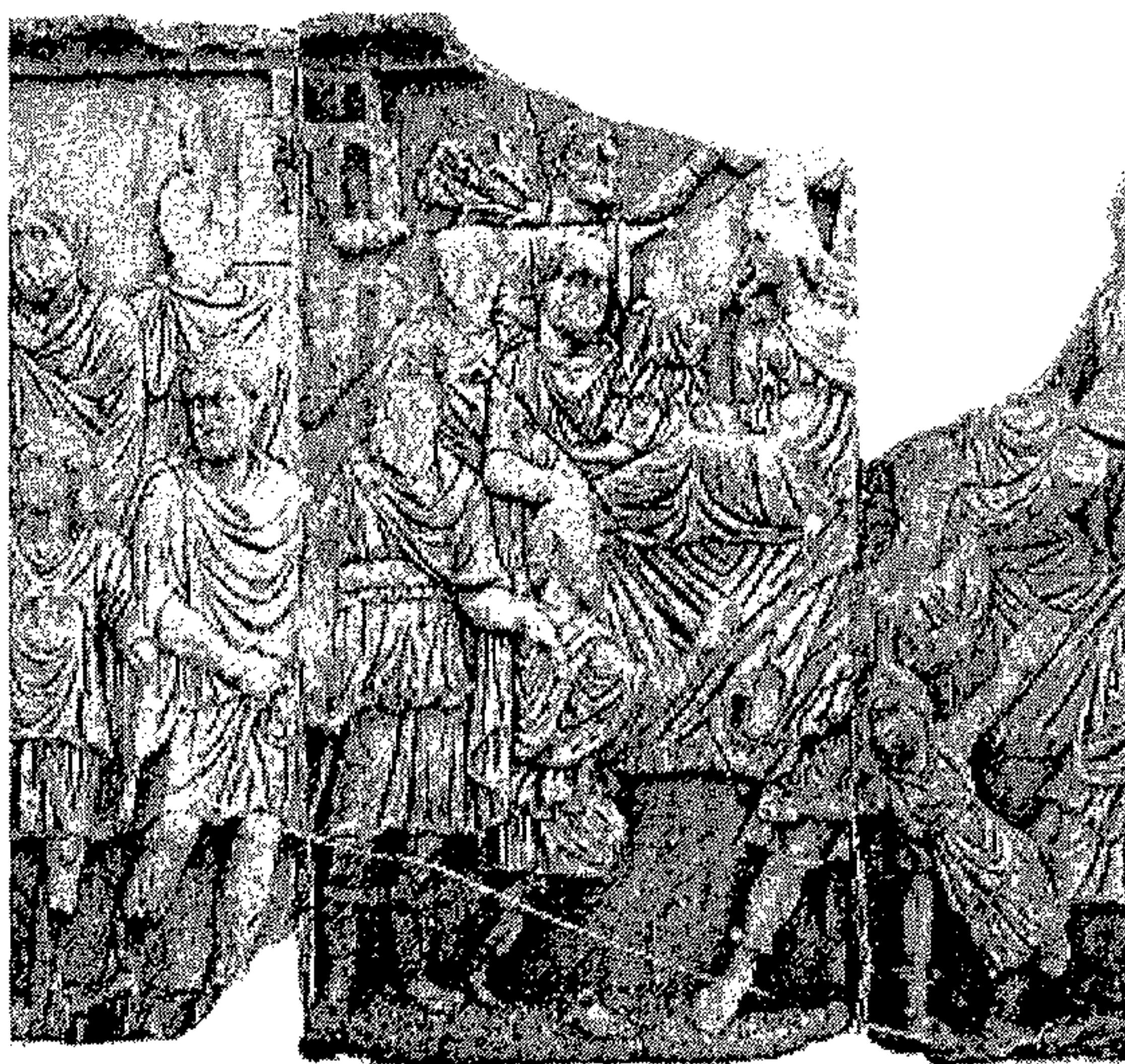


FIGURE 10.1 BARBARIAN WOMAN ON THE SEVERAN ARCH AT LEPCIS MAGNA

other horsemen and 'by a litter that evidently contained a prisoner woman of high rank' (Bandinelli 1966: 33), illustrated here.

As illustrated in Figure 10.2, the female prisoners are wearing Phrygian caps and are also carried on litters, accompanied by captives and a trophy. The Phrygian caps suggest the Eastern victories of Septimius Severus, although in fact a triumph was never actually held.<sup>8</sup> A triumph such as the one depicted here would in any case have been celebrated at Rome and not at Leptis Magna where the arch was erected - the artists would have been unlikely to have seen the real triumph had there been one. The fact that the artists were Syrians (Bandinelli 1966: 48) could also explain the Phrygian caps. It is quite possible that, as Bandinelli (1966: 47) suggests, these friezes do not depict a real triumph at all, but a solemn *reditus*. In this sense the

They took delight in watching the captive Moorish women go by, noting how, in fear, they rode on tall camels with branded heads, how some held their small children beneath their breasts, how with faces tinged with sorrow, these poor mothers struggled with both arms to hold on to the baggage on their heads and the little cradles they carried. Their unholy hearts groaned, for now they were quite willing to serve the wretched mothers of Africa. [Ioh. 6.82-89]

In imperial iconography the chained barbarian woman is a familiar figure. It is however highly unlikely that the women we see on the arch of the Severi at Leptis Magna (ca. 206) (Figure 10.1 or 10.2) are African women. The first panel is rather badly damaged. Just off the illustration to the left are Septimius with his two sons in a chariot, preceded by



FIGURE 10.2 FEMALE PRISONER ON THE SEVERAN ARCH, SE SIDE

<sup>8</sup> In AD 195 Severus annexed the kingdom of Osroene and BIRLEY (1988<sup>2</sup>): *Septimius Severus, the African emperor*, 115-116, suggests that the titles he received ('Arabicus' and 'Adiabenicus') are the result of the Arabs and the Adiabeni offering their submission soon after Severus had entered Mesopotamia. The Senate decreed a triumph, which Severus refused, although he accepted a triumphal arch.





FIGURE 10.3 HADRIAN RAISES UP THE KNEELING WOMAN WHO PERSONIFIES AFRICA

women prisoners are merely symbolic of Rome's subjugation of the enemy. The only symbolic use of the African prisoner is in the coin illustrated below, showing the Roman emperor's magnanimity in raising the female prisoner up and transforming her into the personification of a happy and prosperous province, as Hadrian does to 'Africa'.<sup>9</sup>

These examples all show that in the context of war women were 'victims', seen as helpless booty, something to be gained from the enemy, and a means by which the defeated enemy could be humiliated.<sup>10</sup> But seen from another angle Africa also had a long history of traditions which were favourable to individual female power and even dominance, although most of these owe much to

Punic influence rather than the indigenous African tradition. In some instances women are also among the instigators and perpetrators of war.

Women from East Africa had already gained some renown in Greek mythology, for example Andromeda, daughter of the Aethiopian king, or Circe (who from the evidence of Greek vases may have been a black woman) and her niece, Medea. For the Romans the city of Carthage was mythologically associated with Dido, also called Elyssa, Queen of Carthage, who in Virgil's epic becomes the lover of the hero Aeneas and eventually commits suicide.<sup>11</sup> In the legend as it is told by Timaeus, however, Dido was the intrepid queen who ventured out from her native Tyre and founded the city of Carthage, probably during the 8<sup>th</sup> century BC.<sup>12</sup> Whether the figure of the Queen of Carthage is historical or not, the northern part of the continent of Africa offers much other evidence of individual female prominence. Perhaps the earlier semi-historical figures were the germ that gave rise to the nuanced portrayal of Virgil's tragic Punic queen.

The arguments in favour of early matriarchal cultures in Africa have already been briefly mentioned,<sup>13</sup> and there are certainly a number of Afro-Punic legends about powerful women. The ἑθνος γυναικοκρατούμενον or Amazonian people described by Diodorus Siculus (at some length) [3.53 *passim*] as living in the extreme West of Libya, although largely fictional, could possibly be explained with reference to these early matriarchal survivals on the North African continent (Diop 1959: 111 *passim*; Bates 1970:111-112), although given their general popularity in antiquity this seems inconclusive.<sup>14</sup> The Roman African mosaics collected by Dunbabin

<sup>9</sup> The image of female figures such as Felix Carthago and the use of originally Punic imagery on African coinage minted by the Diocletians and by the Vandal kings is discussed by CLOVER (1986): 'Felix Karthago'.

<sup>10</sup> In his article 'Costume as geographic indicator: barbarians and prisoners on cuirassed statue breastplates' (1994), GERGEL inadvertently shows that all the scenes of conquest depict female captives.

<sup>11</sup> The name Dido is Greek, while Elyssa is Phoenician (Abun-Nasr 1971: 15).

<sup>12</sup> The possible and varied interpretations of this legend are summarised by SOREN ET AL (1990): *Carthage: Uncovering the mysteries and splendors of ancient Tunisia*, 17-29.

<sup>13</sup> See pp. 49-50.

<sup>14</sup> The Amazons are also mentioned by Homer (in Phrygia), Herodotus (in western Turkey), Pliny the Elder and Strabo (foot of the Caucasus). Modern evidence for their existence in Africa rests on rock paintings of the Sahara showing female bow carriers (Loth 1987: 62).



(1978) contain enough Amazonian scenes to show that this was a theme which was kept very much alive in Roman Africa.<sup>15</sup> Another unusual instance of mythological female prominence is indicated by the mosaic from Thysdrus below. Two female centaurs are placed on either side of a nude woman, probably Venus, who is being crowned with an elaborate headpiece. Female centaurs are very rare in antiquity (Wimmer 1963: 37; Dubois 1991: 31). The exact meaning of this stylized mythological scene is difficult to determine.<sup>16</sup> The mosaic is not referred to at all in Du Bois' work on Centaurs and Amazons (1991), but from her discussion it emerges that both these mythological groups 'tested the boundaries ... between nature and culture' (1991: 32) - they were the definition of the 'Other', the non-Greek or in this case the non-Romanized population. It seems likely that the Amazons and their popularity are more of a reflection of the proximity of the 'Other', the barbarian nomadic Berber tribes outside civilized society, than a reflection of early matriarchal traditions having filtered through to the tradition of Roman African art.

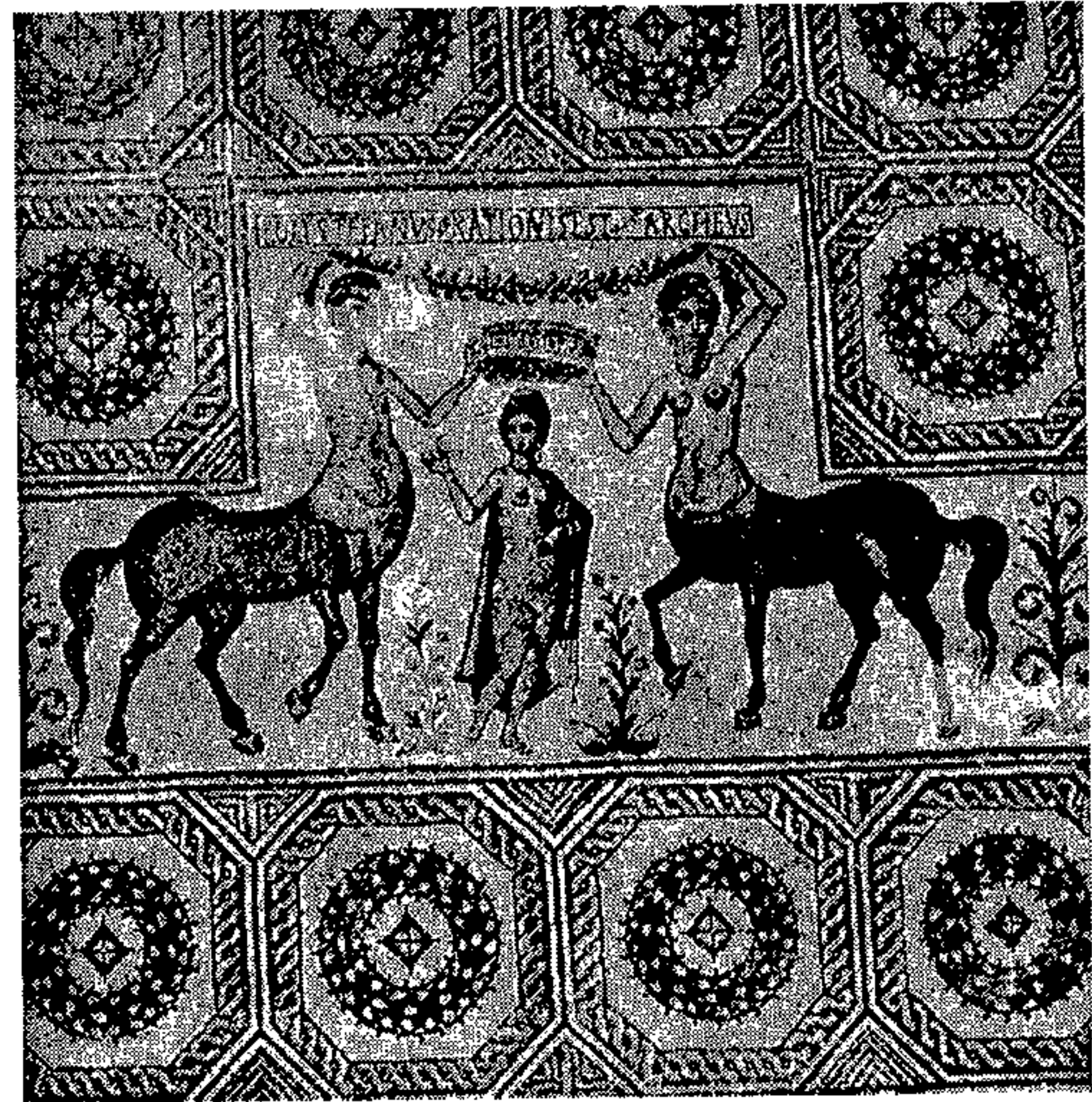


FIGURE 10.4 TWO FEMALE CENTAURS AND WOMAN

Women's groups similar to the mythological examples given above are attested elsewhere. There was a story current in Roman times of a tribe, the Byaei, where the women ruled the women and the men the men [Nicolaus Dam., *FHG* 133]. A reference in the medical treatise of Caelius Aurelianus of Sicca Veneria (5<sup>th</sup> century) mentions 'the women who are called *tribades* because they engage in both kinds of intercourse, are more eager to have intercourse with women than with men, and pursue women with an almost masculine jealousy' [*Tardae Pass.* 4.9.132-133].<sup>17</sup> In the 5<sup>th</sup> century BC Herodotus [4.193] points to a few incidences of collective female prominence, for example in the case of the Zauces, a Libyan tribe, where the women drove their husbands' chariots to battle. While tales of this sort often have 'entertainment value' which renders them less convincing as a social observation, there is some modern support for the fact that at least some native African women, particularly in the East, had a greater position of equality with men than may be supposed from some of the Roman perspectives. In her anthropological study of modern Algerian women Jansen (1989: 294) points to the observations of other anthropologists who compare the position of women in nomadic Arab society with that of the Berber (and less Islamic) Kabyle, finding the latter more liberated and more respected.<sup>18</sup> Relatively

<sup>15</sup> See also DU BOIS (1991): *Centaurs and Amazons. Women and the pre-history of the great chain of being*, for the role of the Amazons in the context of women's history. Also FOURNET-PILIPENKO (1961/2): 'Sarcophages romaines de Tunisie', figure 151: fragments of the battle between the Greeks and the Amazons, found at Sicca Veneria.

<sup>16</sup> On a more prosaic level, the Polystefanus referred to in the inscription is probably the owner of the house where the mosaic was found, and the *rationis archeus* a reference to his high-ranking clerical position (Wimmer 1963: 37). There are no other references to him.

<sup>17</sup> Roman source material for female homosexual activity is also mentioned by ROUSSELLE 1992: 'Body politics in ancient Rome', 323. See also BREMMER (1989): 'Why did early Christianity attract upper-class women?', 130-131.

<sup>18</sup> JANSEN (1989): 'Ethnocentrism in the study of Algerian women' sees this view as too ethnocentric because such scholars measured the African societies against the yardstick of their own (most of the scholars Jansen quotes are French). Her chapter does nothing to refute



therefore, although Berber women may have been disadvantaged compared to Roman women, they may have been better off than under later Arab traditions.

The history of the Carthaginians also features two historical heroic Punic women, although of legendary proportions: the wife of Hasdrubal, who throws herself into the flames with her children as Carthage falls to the Roman siege, but remains nameless [App., *Pun.* 131], and Sophonisba, the daughter of Hasdrubal, who drinks the cup of poison rather than feature in Scipio's triumph [Liv. 30.7, 8; App., *Pun.* 27-28; Dio 17.57].<sup>19</sup> There may have been others, but we have only the Graeco-Roman authors occasional references to fall back on.

During the Roman period itself African warrior queens pitted their forces against the Empire. The Roman occupation of Egypt under Augustus brought the Meroitic Queen Amanirenas to their notice when she fought the Roman legions [Dio 54.5],<sup>20</sup> and in the 4<sup>th</sup> century Cyria played a role in the revolt of her brother Firmus against Roman rule, although one must wonder, given the tendency of ancient historians to caricature warrior women as 'Other', how accurate this brief portrait is:

*Progressusque aliquantum, iuxta Addense municipium comperit, dissonas cultu et sermonum varietate, nationes plurimas unum spirantibus animis, immanium exordia concitare bellorum, adigente horanteque maxima spe praemiorum, sorore Firmi nomine Cyria, quae abundans divitiis, et destinatione feminea, nisibus magnis instituit iuvare germanum.*

Having advanced some distance, near the municipal town of Adda, Theodosius learned that a great number of tribes, differing in civilization and in variety of language, but united in their purpose, were stirring up the beginnings of cruel wars, instigated and abetted through a very great hope of rewards by a sister of Firmus named Cyria, who, abounding in wealth and in feminine persistence, had resolved to make great efforts to aid her brother. [Amm. Mar. 29.5.28]

The Byzantine period brings us to another nameless heroine. During the Arab invasion the daughter of Gregorius fought by his side but was promised by her father to whoever assassinated his enemy Abdallah ibn Saad. The latter promptly promised her to whoever killed her father, but in the oldest version of the story dating from the 9<sup>th</sup> century [Ibn 'Abd al-Hakam, *Futūh*, 184-185], after her father's defeat she threw herself off the camel that carried her off. By her death, which took the matter out of their hands, she decided her own fate.<sup>21</sup> And it is with another warrior queen that the history of Roman Africa comes to an end. A dramatic tale is told of the Kāhina or Al-Kahena, 'the prophetess' and queen of the Aurès who between 690 and 698 led the Berbers in a successful scorched-earth campaign against the Arab general Hassān ibn al-Nu'mān al Ghassānī, but was eventually defeated and died on the battle field.<sup>22</sup> Christides (2000: 48) feels that the report of the Kāhina's attempts to deprive Hassān of provisions and means of defence by burning plantations and fortifications is 'spurious' in the belief that the Berbers were not 'primitive nomads, indifferent to the destruction of their environment'. Instead, Christides feels that it is more likely that only some land close to Hassān's army was destroyed. It is probably likely that the scorched-earth campaign did not take on the proportions given by a

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the perspective that the position of women in Berber society is 'better' than that of Arab women except to point to the ethnocentricity of this view.

<sup>19</sup> Mentioned above, p. 53.

<sup>20</sup> A number of ancient references to this episode are collected in HENDRICKX (1984): *Official documents written in Greek illustrating the ancient history of Nubia and Ethiopia*, 32-34.

<sup>21</sup> Such stories of Byzantine heroines abducted by Arab conquerors are a *topos* in Arabic and Byzantine literature (Christides 2000: 42).

<sup>22</sup> See also TALBI (1971): 'Un nouveau fragment de l'histoire de l'Occident musulman 62-196/682-812. L'épopée d'al Kāhina', 19-40, for a discussion of the evidence on the Kāhina and some of the battle movements of the two sides related to the topography of the area.



growing heroic legend with the customary embellishments of historical fact. But the destruction of the environment is not the privilege of primitive nomads, as later history has shown.<sup>23</sup>

The Kāhina has been considered Jewish, Christian and Berber by modern scholars,<sup>24</sup> something which is left obscure by our earliest source, Ibn 'Abd al-Hakam's *Futūḥ*.<sup>25</sup> Brett and Fentress (1996: 85) explain the Kāhina's role as a literary tool in Ibn 'Abd al-Hakam's work, since it serves to explain the success of at least one Berber prince, her son, as a commander in the Arab army. In Ibn 'Abd al-Hakam's version the Kāhina adopts the Arab Khālīd as her son, and hopes that he will introduce his adoptive brothers into the army of Hassan, so that they may lead the Arab armies to ultimate victory: 'The story of Kāhina, prophesying her own death at the hands of the Arabs and the future of her sons in their service, is a celebration of the alliance of the two nations' (Brett and Fentress 1996: 87).

Warrior queens can however not be taken as evidence that the average woman's lot was a good one, since the former usually operated outside all legal and social conventions. It is therefore unlikely that these occasional prominent roles taken by women in proximity to Roman(ized) culture influenced individual Roman African women to assume some (rather more modest) political prominence in their own context, as will be discussed in Chapters 12 and 13. In this sense there appears to be a distinct division between the eastern and western parts of North Africa, which also becomes apparent from the instances occurring in East Africa mentioned above. In neighbouring Cyrene, for example, the queen mother Pheretima,<sup>26</sup> Greek or presumably of Greek descent, sought refuge in Cyprus, and asked for an army that would put her son back in power. Following their success she ruled while her son was away, 'attending to the business of government and taking her seat in the council' [Hdt 4.163-165]. Surely most un-Greek behaviour for a woman, but not particularly unusual in the East, where other influences on Greek culture brought forth queens who deserved a mention in history, such as Artemisia of Halicarnassus [Hdt 8.87-88]. Not much of this attitude is apparent in the more western parts of Africa, where native traditions argued a much lower prominence for women.

## ROMAN AFRICAN WOMEN UNDER THE LAW

Unification of the Mediterranean peoples under Roman law only occurred early in the 3<sup>rd</sup> century AD, but during the period in question Roman law applied in most recorded cases in the African provinces. Most of such cases of course pertain to urban areas or areas which were in any case fairly Romanized. In addition by the 3<sup>rd</sup> century AD class privileges ensured preferential treatment in Roman law for the *honestiores*, which also would have inhibited a large section of the population from being represented in legal documents (Rives 1995: 32).

Only occasionally does the evidence allow us a glimpse into the use of legal principles for the non-élite or semi-

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<sup>23</sup> Talbī (1971: 40) ascribes her negligent attitude to the environment to the fact that the branch of her tribe (the Zanāta of the Ġarāwa) was traditionally nomadic - her own interests would therefore not have been affected by large scale natural destruction.

<sup>24</sup> CLARKE (1984): 'African warrior queens', 128-9, maintains she was a Hebrew and that her resistance was nationalistic since she did not fight for Christianity in her resistance of Islam. CHRISTIDES (2000): *Byzantine Libya and the march of the Arabs towards the West of North Africa*, 14, is dubious about the reliability of some of the Arabic sources which claim that she was of Jewish faith. He surmises that she and her tribe had been converted to Christianity via Judaism. The 'idol' which some sources report that she carried on her camel was very likely a heavy cross (Christides 2000: 47). See also the discussion by Talbī (1971: 41-42).

<sup>25</sup> *Kitāb Futūḥ Miṣr wa'l Maghrib* - 'Book of the Conquests of Egypt and of Magreb'.

<sup>26</sup> A Greek colony founded in 631.



Romanized groups. At Lamasba a Hamitic-Semitic pattern of inheritance has been detected by Shaw (1982a: 89-90) in 'an exact splitting of inheritance with (probably) the eldest son receiving twice the allotment of the rest'. The right of women to inherit and own land under Roman law, says Shaw, would naturally have had a modifying effect on this law. This explanation indeed seems more likely than a native African influence. While it is true that even among Berber tribes today maternal affiliation is more important than paternal affiliation in settling inheritance questions (Bates 1970: 37), this is not the same as female ownership, since women merely served as a conduit for male ownership of property.<sup>27</sup>

In the case of the *Albertini Tablets* from the late 5<sup>th</sup> century AD, it transpires that widows counted as the head of families [*T.Alb.* 11; 27; 33] and that wives were closely affiliated with their husbands in transactions [*T.Alb.* 4; 6; 7; 8; 9; 10; 12; 13; 14; 16; 18; 19; 20; 21; 22; 23; 25; 26; 28; 29; 31; 32], all of which were documented according to Roman law. Most of the documents appear to have been written by community leaders such as local priests or *magistri* - about 30 different hands are discernible - and there is a 'familiarity with the proper forms of legal transactions: signatures were witnessed, guarantees were provided' (Raven 1983: 202). Even in small communities such as these *coloni* at Bir Trough, Roman law gave validity to transactions. What is also of interest is that these documents were written during the Vandal reign. Roman law therefore appears to have remained in force where Vandals were themselves not involved as interested parties (Mattingly 1994: 215). Where the Vandal interests were at stake the conquerors applied their own laws. According to their customary law the Vandals were controlled by the 'leaders of thousands' (*millenarii*) who looked after the administrative, fiscal and judicial affairs of a thousand head of families each and which remained quite separate from Roman law (Abun-Nasr 1971: 49). In cases of inheritance the male line was favoured - first in the line of succession to a man with no children were his brothers and then his uncles, first on his father's and then on his mother's side (Wemple, 1985: 10-11). This androcentric view is not very surprising in a culture which, according to our ancient sources, appears to have seen their women as part of their possessions - Vandal wives and children are referred to by Procopius in a manner which suggests that the author understood the Vandal men to be expressing regret at a loss of property [*De Bell. Vand.* 3.25.16].

Procopius relates some of the events concerning a rebellion which broke out as the result of Solomon's attempts to appropriate the properties for the state which had belonged to Vandal women:

στρατιώταις στάσις ἐν Λιβύῃ ἐνέπεσεν. ἡ ὅπως τε ἐφύν καὶ ἐς ὃ τι ἐτελεύτησεν, ἐρῶν ἔρχομαι.... Ἐπειδὴ Βανδίλοι ἡσσήθησαν τῇ μάχῃ, .... οἱ Ῥωμαίων στρατιῶται τὰς αὐτῶν παῖδας τε καὶ γυναῖκας ἐν γαμετῶν ἐποιήσαντο λόγῳ. ἡ δὲ αὐτῶν ἐκάστη τὸν ἄνδρα ἐνήγε τῶν χωρίων τῆς κτήσεως μεταποιεῖσθαι ὧν αὐτὴ πρότερον κυρία ἐτύγχανεν οὐσα, οὐχ ὅσιον λέγουσα εἶναι, εἰ Βανδίλοις μὲν ξυνοικοῦσαι τούτων ἀπώναντο, τοῖς δὲ αὐτοῖς νενικηκόσιν ἐς γάμον ἐλθοῦσαι οὕτω δὴ τῶν σφίσιν ὑπαρχόντων στερήσονται.

A mutiny arose among the soldiers in Libya...After the Vandals had been defeated in battle, ... the Roman soldiers took their daughters and wives and made them their own by lawful marriage. As each one of these women kept urging her husband to lay claim to the possession of the lands which she had owned previously, saying that it was not right or fitting if, while living with the Vandals, they had enjoyed these lands, but after entering into marriage with the conquerors of the Vandals, they were then to be deprived of their possessions.

[*De Bell. Vand.* 4.14.7-15]

From this it appears that the wives of the Vandals had come into possession of their husbands' lands, or at least thought they had a right to the land title. This confirms that the male line must have been more or less

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<sup>27</sup> Among the Imushagh, for example, the law of inheritance is called the law Benî-Ummîah or the 'law of the Mother's children' (Bates 1970: 112).



extinguished by the recent wars, as the Vandal men were either killed, dispersed or taken to Constantinople as prisoners.

But it is Roman law which most affected the lives of the women with which we are here concerned. Roman law went through a number of changes which was to benefit women in two major ways. Firstly, in increasing their access to money in terms of inheritance and, secondly, in allowing them to dispose of it in the way they wished.<sup>28</sup>

### **Roman laws affecting women**

Essentially the discussion to follow will deal only women married *sine manu*, since this type of marriage was already overwhelmingly in evidence by the 1<sup>st</sup> century AD - references to marriages with *manus* will be kept to the footnotes where possible.

#### **I. tutela**

Roman law regarding gender issues was rooted in gender division, relegating women to male control on the same footing as minors, on the basis of their *imbecillitas mentis* (weakness of mind) and their *infirmitas sexus* (weakness of their sex).<sup>29</sup> As discussed in Chapter 3, a woman who married *sine manu* remained under the control of her father, and on her father's death was subject to a *tutor*, usually someone from her own family such as her brother or uncle. If a guardian was not appointed by the will, a male agnate of the deceased was appointed as *tutor legitimus*.<sup>30</sup> The role of the guardian was broadly to safeguard any property for the family to which the woman was legally attached. A woman needed his authorization before she could sell property for which a formal act of mancipation was necessary (land, buildings and slaves). A widow from a *sine manu* marriage needed no formal authorization for contracting another marriage, setting a dowry, selling property which required no formal act of mancipation (such as merchandise), collection of debts and accepting an inheritance (Thomas 1992: 135).<sup>31</sup>

Thus, in theory, under Roman law during the first two centuries AD, a woman was never entirely free of male control, even though in practice she did have a certain amount of authority and autonomy which was accorded to her by the force of convention (Dixon 1988: 44). Nevertheless modern scholars are in general agreement that Roman law increasingly benefited women from the material point of view as well as in the area of personal autonomy, even though this may not have been intended.<sup>32</sup> From the time when Augustus introduced laws by

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<sup>28</sup> Only a few relevant points regarding the legal situation for women under Roman law will be raised here. A more detailed discussion of these and other aspects can be found in GARDNER (1986a): *Women in Roman law and society* and also some useful points in SALLER (1994): *Patriarchy, property and death in the Roman family*.

<sup>29</sup> Ulpian [Reg. 11.1] states explicitly that guardians are appointed for females on account of the weakness of their sex and their ignorance of business.

<sup>30</sup> In cases where a woman married *cum manu*, which became increasingly uncommon, a woman remained a minor until the death of her husband, at which point a guardian was appointed for her, usually someone from her husband's family, for example her brother-in-law or her son. *Libertinae* or freedwomen passed into the *tutela* of their former owners who had to be men.

<sup>31</sup> A widow who had married *cum manu* did need her guardian's permission to remarry (Gardner 1986a: 18-19).

<sup>32</sup> A good example, illustrating that women were not intentionally the primary benefitters of legal changes, is the phrasing of this passage by Cassius Dio: 'Since among the freeborn there were more males than females, he [Augustus] allowed all who wished, except the senators, to marry freedwomen and ordered that their offspring should be held legitimate' [54.16.1-2].



which freeborn women who had born three children (four children for freedwomen) were freed from *tutela* and could live their lives without a guardian,<sup>33</sup> the possibility for female autonomy was acknowledged, even though the real intention of laws such as the *lex Papia Poppaea* was to persuade Roman women to bear more children.<sup>34</sup> But Roman law [*lex Iulia* and the *lex Papia*, 18 BC and AD 9] now also punished women who did not remarry after two years of widowhood or eight months after a divorce by placing a ban on receiving legacies except from relatives up to the 6<sup>th</sup> degree (Gardner 1986a: 77-78), although to what extent this affected women in reality is debatable.<sup>35</sup> A further change during the reign of Claudius was the abolition of automatic agnatic guardianship, and a man's intestate death no longer left his free daughters to the control of one of his male relatives. By the 2<sup>nd</sup> century AD tutors could also be legally compelled to give their consent where women for example wanted to sell property (Gardner 1986a: 19). In the case of Pudentilla her first and second marriages were *sine manu* (Hunink 1997: 194), and she would have become *sui iuris* on the death of her father and entitled to own property. We know by the mention of the *tutor auctor mulieris*, Cassius Longinus [*Apol.* 101.6], appointed by her father's will, that Pudentilla probably inherited estates from her father (in a *sine manu* marriage Pudentilla would have had a guardian who was not her husband). The changes to women's guardianship mentioned above clearly indicate that a *tutor* by this time was a mere formality. There is no mention of the permission of the *tutor* being sought in the sale of land which Apuleius mentions, for which technically Pudentilla would have had to apply [*Apol.* 94.2] (Hunink 1997: 232).

All these changes made it difficult to justify guardianship of women as an institution, since many women were clearly managing perfectly well without it, as Gaius [1.190] argues:

'It appears that no serious grounds have been advanced for maintaining adult women under guardianship. What is commonly alleged, namely that women are usually misled by their *levitas animi* (lightness of spirit) and that it is therefore more equitable for them to be governed by the authority of their tutors, appears to be more specious than true, because adult women handle their own affairs, and in some cases the tutor interposes his authority only for the sake of form. Frequently he is even forced by the magistrate to offer his guarantee against his will' (translation Thomas 1992: n.144).

The *Codex Theodosianus* [2.17.1; 30 May 321] thus eventually abolished guardianship for women.

## **II. Women's inheritance from fathers, husbands and children**

It is of interest to know not only how women spent money in benefactions and other affairs (Chapters 12 and 13) but also how they acquired their wealth. In some cases we may know that women were affluent, but we simply do not have the information as to how women came to be wealthy. Aelia Arisuth, the wealthy woman entombed at Gargàresch, may have inherited her money from her father, or even her mother, or a first husband (not Aelius Magnus, since it appears conclusive that she predeceased him, as discussed above).<sup>36</sup> She may even

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<sup>33</sup> 'Guardianship terminates for a freeborn woman by title of maternity of three children; for a freedwoman under statutory guardianship by maternity of four children: those who have other kinds of guardians . . . are released from wardship by title of three children' [Gaius, *Instit.* 1.194].

<sup>34</sup> Since Augustus held out the abolition of guardianship as an inducement to women this may be an indication that women found this guardianship irksome.

<sup>35</sup> See GARDNER (1986a): *Women in Roman law and society*, 78, on this issue. The law later fell into disuse and was eventually repealed by Constantine

<sup>36</sup> See p. 182.



have been a superlative businesswoman, but generally real wealth even in African provincial society was at least in part inherited and consisted of land.

The general move from a *cum manu* marriage to a *sine manu* marriage which had begun during the late Republic was also motivated by familial interests rather than women's emancipation (Dixon 1985: 354). It had less to do with the individual rights of women or an acknowledgment of their independent capacities than with a shift in the emphasis on the absolute right to 'family' property, which society seemed to see as less straightforward than in the past.<sup>37</sup> When women who were married *cum manu* inherited wealth from their fathers, this passed out of the agnatic family.<sup>38</sup> In a *sine manu* marriage when a woman inherited from her father, her intestate heirs in turn would be from her father's family and not her own children or her husband. Although, as will be indicated below, daughters mentioned in wills usually received less than sons, for a woman to inherit from her husband or father was so much the custom that Apuleius was able to imply that the daughter of Rufinus was left an 'insultingly small legacy' by her husband Pontianus as a reflection of her 'true worthlessness' (... *qui ei ad ignominiam lintea adscribi ducentorum fere denariorum iusserit*) [*Apol.* 97.20].

**(i) inheritance from fathers:**

The *paterfamilias* was almost entirely free to draw up his will as he pleased, even though disinheritance was viewed quite seriously from a social perspective (Gardner 1986a: 163-164). Although there is some argument about whether the dowry<sup>39</sup> counted in lieu, or as part, of a daughter's inheritance (Saller 1994; Corbier 1985; 1990), it seems that daughters in Roman society did occasionally inherit beyond the actual dowry, but not as substantially as sons. Although our evidence for the Roman African context is very meagre, it does not appear to deviate from this general perception (Champlin 1991: 114): in wills daughters were given smaller shares than sons, or were not made heirs at all but were given legacies.<sup>40</sup>

**(ii) inheritance from husbands**

Even in marriages without *manus* it was customary for husbands to leave their widows well provided for in their testaments (Gardner 1986a: 163).<sup>41</sup> It was quite possible, however, that she would predecease him, although, as mentioned previously, women who survived childbirth were statistically likely to become widows in time (Dixon 1988: 179). Lassère's calculations<sup>42</sup> give the average age reached by men in Roman Africa as 42.3, while women averaged 40.8 - not a very great difference but a difference nevertheless. Lassère's demographic material also established 100 widows for every 150 widowers in Roman Africa. This does not rule out that widows who survived past the age of 40 could have amassed large fortunes, but indicates that there could not

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<sup>37</sup> But see the comments by GARDNER (1986a): *Women in Roman law and society*, 14 on the danger of oversimplifying the reasons for the transition from marriages with *manus* to free marriages. See also SHAW (1991a): 'The cultural meaning of death: age and gender in the Roman family', 69-70, for the shift from the agnate to the 'looser, cognatic, individualized' system of family organization.

<sup>38</sup> An indication that this was viewed with misgiving since Republican times is the Voconian law of 169 BC, when men in the top property class could not make their daughter heir to more than half of their fortune (Fantham *et al* 1994: 263).

<sup>39</sup> See the discussion on women's access to dowries below.

<sup>40</sup> The reason for this was essentially to avoid the stipulations of the Voconian law mentioned in note 38 of this chapter (Gardner 1986a: 170 *passim*).

<sup>41</sup> Women married *cum manu* could inherit from their husbands together with their children.

<sup>42</sup> The information in LASSÈRE (1977): *Ubique populus*, is given in great detail: tables on pp. 525; 528-537 and discussion of the results, 526-7.



have been very many such women.<sup>43</sup>

In addition to the increasingly ineffectual *tutela* and the fact that they could inherit property independent of their husbands, women could sometimes retain some sort of control over their dowries. A certain amount of autonomy was granted firstly by women's legal right to initiate divorce, and this indirect control of her dowry (which under normal circumstances had to be returned on divorce) meant that they had effective autonomy in property dealing and matrimonial decisions (Dixon 1985: 372). A woman whose husband predeceased her could have the dowry returned to her for her own use unless she intended a second marriage, in which case it would pass into the usufruct of her new husband (Pudentilla's marriage to Apuleius was *sine manu* and her dowry had not become part of Apuleius' property). The actual value of dowries has been much discussed. According to custom a woman's dowry consisted of property - land, buildings, slaves, and other items - and could amount to as much as 400 000 sesterces, as we see in the case of Rufinus' daughter, or 300 000 sesterces in the case of Pudentilla herself [*Apol.* 91.7; 92.2].<sup>44</sup> Saller (1994: 213-215) estimates that Roman dowries were relatively modest in comparison with the father's estate, averaging about 5-10%. In Pudentilla's case the dowry given to Apuleius is calculated to be about 7% of her estate (Saller 1984a: 201). Hunink (1997: 225) notes that the reason why dowries were relatively modest was that their main purpose was not to give a woman her share of the estate but to provide for her in her husband's house. Saller's view (1994: 215) is that the high rate of divorce and remarriage would also have discouraged the provision of large dowries. Clark (1993: 13) says of Roman women in Late Antiquity: 'Her dowry was, in all probability, the biggest financial transaction in which she was ever involved, and it was certainly a major investment by her family'.<sup>45</sup> This would appear to be as much of a comment on women's involvement in financial matters in Late Antiquity than it would pertain to the amount of the dowry, but dowries involving enormous sums are unlikely to have been usual in Roman Africa.

### **(iii) inheritance from their children**

The mother-child relationship was acknowledged when mothers who had given birth to three children were accorded the right to lay claim to the inheritance of a child who predeceased them (*senatusconsultum Tertullianum*). Children were of course entitled to give gifts to their parents, and Ferrandus mentions that Fulgentius on entering monastic life gave his property to his mother Mariana, and that he gave this gift to his mother alone, even though he had a younger brother named Claudius, so that later their mother could pass it on to her younger son 'if he served her well' [*Vita Fulg.* 5].

### **III. Women as trustees**

In the *sine manu* marriage a Roman husband had no legal obligation to his wife in his will, and if he did make her in practical terms the trustee of the estate (which would turn be left to their children), it was a vote of special confidence in her abilities. Dixon (1988: 51) dryly comments that this argues for a greater confidence in female

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<sup>43</sup> Although our literary sources for wealthy women in Africa are rather rhetorical and for that reason probably exaggerated (for example Tertullian [*Ad Uxor.* 2.8.4], Corippus [*Ioh.* 3.369-375]), there is some evidence of women who were extremely well-off, an aspect which will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 11.

<sup>44</sup> But note the cautions voiced by HUNINK (1997): *Apuleius of Madauros: Pro se de magia*, 186 n.1, about basing calculations on a rhetorical text.

<sup>45</sup> Constantine also introduced legislation regulating procedures on pre-nuptial gifts and the dowry agreements if a betrothal was broken off (Nathan 2000: 61).



administrative capability 'than was current in, say, classical Greece or Victorian England'. Since Republican times women were often given the informal charge of their minor children with the blessing of the official male guardian (Thomas 1992:130-131). During the 2<sup>nd</sup> century it became increasingly common for mothers to be named as guardians of their children in wills (Thomas 1992: n.63), although this was not valid except by special favour of the emperor before its formalization in 390 by a law of Theodosius. It was even known for a *paterfamilias* to disinherit his children in his will in favour of his wife, for her to restore the property to the children when they came of age [*Dig.* 36.1.76.1; 28.2.18: 38.2.12.2]. In AD 392 Roman law was made to specify that a woman who had inherited usufruct of her husband's patrimony had to cede this property to their children if she remarried [*Cod. Iust.* 5.10.1]. The *senatus consultum Tertullianum* also made it law that women who died intestate should be succeeded by their children.<sup>46</sup> The situation of Pudentilla in this regard is somewhat anomalous. When Pudentilla's husband died, guardianship (*tutela impuberis*) of her two sons fell to his father [*Apol.* 68.3-4]. When the father of Sicinius Amicus was still alive, and his son had clearly still been in his *potestas* when he died. Not being *sui iuris* he had been unable to make a valid will nor to make Pudentilla a trustee for their children (Hunink 1977: 182). Pudentilla's father-in-law subsequently wished to marry her off to another of his sons, threatening that if she did not comply, he would exclude her sons from their father's heritage by his own will [68.3-4]. Pudentilla, with Penelope-like patience, managed to stave off her suitor for 14 years until her father-in-law died.<sup>47</sup> If Apuleius is to be believed, Pudentilla's father-in-law left only a miserable fortune [*Apol.* 71.6]. His death then made Pudentilla's elder son, Pontianus, guardian over his brother [*Apol.* 68.4].

#### **IV. Women disposing of wealth by gift and testament<sup>48</sup>**

A woman inheriting from her husband or father became mistress of a patrimony independent of her husband,<sup>49</sup> but her right to dispose of her own property at death was only acquired gradually,<sup>50</sup> and that it took place at all Gardner (1986a: 166) ascribes to 'the importance of maintaining mobility of wealth' among families of equal status. A woman who was *sui iuris* could draw up her own will but needed the formal consent of her *tutor* (for the making of the will, though not its contents), although since by the time of Gaius this could already be compelled, most women had free testamentary disposal.<sup>51</sup>

Until the reign of Marcus Aurelius, Roman women did not technically have *potestas* and could therefore not legally make their own children their heirs (Nathan 2000: 28). But, despite the increase in *sine manu* marriages and in divorce there was, according to Dixon (1988: 46) 'a growing feeling that a woman's "natural heirs" were

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<sup>46</sup> *Dig.* 38.17. Further amendments were made in the *senatus consultum Orfitianum* : *Dig.* 38.17 *passim* and *Cod. Iust.* 6.57 *passim* CROOK (1973): 'Intestacy in Roman society' and especially 'Women in Roman succession', 38-44.

<sup>47</sup> On aspects of Penelope see HUNINK (1977): *Apuleius of Madauros: Pro se de magia*, 181.

<sup>48</sup> What women did with their wealth in real terms will largely be the province of Chapters 11 and 12. Here only their legal right over her capital will be examined.

<sup>49</sup> An example is given in the *Apologia* [75.8] where Rufinus' father allegedly transferred the greater part of his property to his wife. She became the legal owner of the property because she had been married *sine manu*, and was able to leave this to her son.

<sup>50</sup> The process is discussed in detail by GARDNER (1986a): *Women in Roman law and society*, 165-170.

<sup>51</sup> Before the reign of Hadrian in order to make a will women also had to undergo a *coemptio* (Gardner 1986a: 167) by which she would undergo a notional sale and through this change of status could choose her own guardian.



her children rather than her brothers' children, no matter what form of marriage she had followed'.<sup>52</sup> Before 178, a woman had to make a will if she wanted her children to inherit her estate, because otherwise her father or other cognates would inherit if she died intestate.<sup>53</sup> In 178 the *senatus consultum Orphitianum* established the legitimate right of succession from mothers to their children:

The Law of the Twelve Tables did not permit children of a mother who died intestate to succeed her, because women have no proper heirs. But later, through a law of Emperors Antoninus and Commodus presented to the Senate, it was decided that children should receive legitimate successions from their mothers even if the mother was not married under the *manus* regime. The mother's consanguine brothers and sisters and all agnates are eliminated from succession in favour of the deceased's children. [Ulpian, *Reg.* 26.7]

Under earlier Roman law a woman married with *manus* would have succeeded her children, and they her, as consanguine brothers and sisters, all being under the *patria potestas* of the husband or father. The new law meant that in the absence of a will, a deceased woman's children now took precedence over her agnatic relatives and her own forebears.<sup>54</sup> The law did not distinguish between a woman's legitimate and illegitimate children until Justinian in 529 (Thomas 1992: 106). It is debatable, however, how much impact women's wills had, both in frequency of occurrence and in how much women actually had to leave. According to Champlin's study (1991: 119) it would seem that 'four out of every five wills were written by men'. Here the proportion of African inscriptions mentioning women's wills is, Champlin (1991: 46) notes, 'wildly out of line': of 58 determinable cases only 2 mention wills made by women, and male testators therefore make up 97%. The question is whether this is a skewed reflection due to some extraneous factor or whether this is indeed a reflection of reality. We already know that statistically women appear to have been less likely to survive their husbands than the other way round, but this is also valid for the Empire as a whole, where the percentage of women's wills is much higher.<sup>55</sup> Champlin (1991: 46) suggests that the discrepancy may be ascribed to the high incidence of soldiers' memorials in the African context, but even bearing this in mind it would seem that Roman African women made wills less often than their counterparts in the rest of the Roman Empire, which implies that there was an indigenous influence which ran counter to the Roman tradition regarding female legal rights to dispose of their property by testament.

The power of the *paterfamilias* was codified in law, but mellowed by custom, while that of the *materfamilias* was recognized by convention but had little legal foundation (Dixon 1988: 5). That a mother could make her own testament gave her an additional element in her relationship with her children, particularly where her estate was considerable. Dixon (1988) argues that the position of respect and authority of the Roman matron, especially widows responsible for young families, was partly due to her control of property and her right to pass this on through testament: 'her children looked to her to secure their future prosperity and social standing' (Kerzer and Saller 1991: 16). Children could look to their mother for material benefits through bestowal of dowry or other gifts,<sup>56</sup> testamentary inheritance of their mother's own property, inheritance from their mother's

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<sup>52</sup> CLARK (1993): *Women in Late Antiquity: pagan and Christian lifestyles*, 59-60, ascribes this change of allowing women to establish a legal relationship with their children and even individuals not their own children to the influence of Greek law.

<sup>53</sup> Freedwomen did not have complete freedom of testamentary disposition since they had to consider obligations to the family who had owned them as slaves.

<sup>54</sup> In 197 Septimius Severus awarded a share of the estate to a child whose mother had died in giving birth to him [*Cod. Iust.* 3.28.3].

<sup>55</sup> The figures given by CHAMPLIN (1991): *Final judgments: duty and emotion in Roman wills*, 46, are: male testators in (i) literary references, 85%, (ii) juristic references 79%, (iii) papyri 82%, (iv) inscriptions Rome, 74%, Italy 87%.

<sup>56</sup> Maternal gifts to dowries featured in legal examples as a matter of course., e.g. *Dig.* 23.3.72 (Paul); *Dig.* 23.3.34 (Ulpian); *Dig.*



father's paternal estate and her dowry, inheritance from the mother's inheritance from her husband, usually on the understanding that she would pass this on to their mutual children. Sons (and probably daughters although we know less about how they felt) passed over by maternal testament felt hard done by, in which they were supported by popular opinion: 'There can be no doubt that society considered the loss of a mother's legacy a serious punishment, one that had to be weighed carefully' (Thomas 1992: 104).<sup>57</sup> Their claim to their intestate mother's estate was weak before 178 (Dixon 1988: 173),<sup>58</sup> nor was a mother legally obliged to recognize her children in her will.

It is clearly concern about her wealth which is the underlying issue of the lawsuit against Apuleius<sup>59</sup> - the initial charge of magic against Apuleius is not the real reason behind the animosity of Pudentilla's relatives against him. The true objection was that Pudentilla's union with a 'stranger' (outside their own family and from a lower social order) was a threat to their access to her capital.<sup>60</sup> Apuleius claims that Pudentilla's elder son had wanted him to marry his mother to ward off a fortune-hunting second husband, but this is in fact the very crime that Apuleius is now implicitly accused of [Apol. 71-72]. Pudentilla's children appear to be afraid that they would be disinherited in favour of the new husband, Apuleius [Apol. 71].<sup>61</sup> Cases of stepfathers appropriating such inheritances were not unknown. In Rome in the 2<sup>nd</sup> century BC, for example, the stepfather of Publius Aebutius appropriated his patrimony [Liv. 39.9-17].<sup>62</sup> It is clear that in the case of Pudentilla and her son a considerable fortune was involved which her in-laws, the Sicinii family, wanted to keep within their own circle.<sup>63</sup> The dowry which Pudentilla gave Apuleius is also a bone of contention, since if Apuleius and Pudentilla should have had a child, this child would be entitled to claim half the dowry.<sup>64</sup> For this reason Apuleius emphasizes that he had agreed to a modest dowry [Apol. 91] and had done his best to promote the relationship between Pudentilla and her sons [Apol. 93]. Dixon (1988: 49) believes that it was Pudentilla's personal fortune which was the bone of contention, since it seems unlikely that she would have inherited her husband's money through her father-in-law in trust for their sons [Apol. 70.4]. This seems plausible in view of the fact that Aemilia Pudentilla was related

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23.3.62 (Modestinus).

<sup>57</sup> Suits to invalidate mothers' wills: *Dig.* 5.2.5; 5.2.16; 5.2.18; *Cod. Iust.* 3.28.1 [a.193]; 3.28.3 [a.197].

<sup>58</sup> Valerius Maximus [7.7.4] relates a similar case in which the woman, Septicia, had disinherited her two sons in favour of her second husband. The sons appealed to Augustus and the will was overturned on the grounds that the marriage had not been legal since it had not been undertaken for the purpose of procreation, since the couple were past childbearing age. Septicia's sons received the right to inheritance and her dowry, which normally would have become her husband's on her death.

<sup>59</sup> 'Such family disputes in which the woman is merely an accompaniment of the coveted money and property, and her marriage a matter of men's self-interested manipulation, cannot always have been so lurid as the case Apuleius sets before us, but they persisted as a social injustice into the nineteenth century' (Fantham *et al* 1994: 361).

<sup>60</sup> See also the emphasis placed on this by FICK (1987): 'Le milieu culturel africain à l'époque antonine et le témoignage d'Apulée', 285-296 as well as THOMPSON (1977-78): 'Rank, social status and esteem in Apuleius'.

<sup>61</sup> BRADLEY (1997): 'Law, magic and culture in the *Apologia* of Apuleius', 203, mentions that Pudentilla had substantial means, inherited in large part from her husband and father-in-law. This does not appear to be the case, since all the facts point to Sicinius Amicus still being under the *potestas* of his father when he died. If Pudentilla's husband or his father had left their property in trust for Pontianus and Pudens, clearly, they would not have needed to be concerned about possible fortune hunters pursuing their mother.

<sup>62</sup> Examples of similar cases are related by Pliny [*Ep.* 6.33].

<sup>63</sup> We are informed in the *Apologia* [71.6] that Pontianus' grandfather had left but a moderate fortune, in contrast to which his mother possessed four million sesterces (*avus modicum reliquerat, mater sestertium quadragies possidebat*).

<sup>64</sup> The *dos profecticia* was given by the father of the woman and could be reclaimed by him if she died, while a *dos adventicia*, which was given by the woman herself or another person, remained in the possession of the husband. Pudentilla fell into the second category and it is for this reason that Apuleius emphasizes the arrangements made for dowry [Apol. 91].



to L. Aemilius Frontinus, the suffect consul under Marcus Aurelius and proconsul under Commodus [*PIR*<sup>2</sup> A 348]. The latter donated a temple to Oea around 182/125 and the sum of one million sesterces for *sportula* and games [*IRT* 230] (Guey 1954: 117). Pudentilla married Sicinius Amicus, from a family from Zarath, a village in the *territorium* of Oea [*Apol.* 23.4]. Clearly [23.4; 71.4] they were a respected but not very wealthy family. It is therefore indicated that the inheritance would be money from Pudentilla's own family rather than that of her husband's. Legally therefore Apuleius was being overcautious since in this case it would have been Pudentilla's right to leave her fortune where she chose. Apuleius uses another curious phrase referring to the financial situation between her and her sons:

*ex quo sane aliquantam pecuniam nullis tabulis, sed, ut aequum erat, mera fide acceptam filiis debebat*

Of this sum, it is true, she owed a considerable portion to her sons, but they had no security for this, relying on her word alone.

[*Apol.* 71.6]

The precise meaning of this sentence is the subject of much discussion. Gutsfeld (1992: 256 n.52) argues for a bequest from Pudentilla's father to her own sons, while Hunink (1977: 186) suggests a loan from the sons to their mother, but himself admits that he can see no good reason why such a loan should have been necessary, given her wealth. More likely would be the simple 'moral' right that children would have to their mother's estate. As Dixon (1988: 49) observes, Apuleius was probably wary of the influence of his opponents and worried that the court and public opinion would be inclined to side with the 'wronged heirs'.

In the *Apologia* [101.4] Apuleius is accused that he forced Pudentilla to assign to him part of her property, and with his wife's money he purchased a considerable estate. He refutes this by saying that his wife's fortune would revert to her family untouched by him, and that the country estate was only a small domain purchased in Pudentilla's name. Gifts between husband and wife were strictly regulated by law, ostensibly to prevent them from disadvantaging themselves due to the affection for the other (Gardner 1986a: 74). Moderate gifts were acceptable 'as long as she does not appear to have been made wealthier' by the gift (Gardner 1986a: 70).<sup>65</sup> The gifts to sons and daughters were less problematic. Pudentilla's sons received gifts on numerous occasions from their mother, for example the HS 50 000 on Pontianus' marriage and Pudens assumption of the *toga virilis*, which took place on the same day [*Apol.* 87.10]. As Hunink (1997: 215) observes, Pudentilla seems to have had some autonomy in arranging such matters for her own convenience.

### **CHRISTIANITY IN ROMAN AFRICA - EMPOWERING OR DISEMPOWERING WOMEN?<sup>66</sup>**

#### **Religious influences on women's autonomy - theories of the African Church fathers and imperial edicts**

If one's point of departure in assessing the impact of Christian *mores* on the position of women in Roman African antiquity were to be the attitude of Jesus Christ towards women in the New Testament, one might imagine a fairly favourable influence, considering his 'encouragement of their untraditional behaviour', and the key role played by women in the events surrounding his death and resurrection (Anderson *et al* 1988; 69-70). Much more influential, however, were the restrictions which Paul placed on women, which were undeniably

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<sup>65</sup> Late Antiquity saw increasing legal prescriptions regarding gift giving and dowries (Gardner 1986a: 47). According to a law of 438 [*Cod. Theod.* 3.5.13], for example, gifts of less than 200 solidi were permissible since they could be recovered.

<sup>66</sup> For a general discussion of the position of women in the Church during the New Testament era and up to Tertullian, see WITHERINGTON (1988): *Women in the earliest churches*.



less favourable and a reinforcement via Judaism of the most conservative Roman attitudes.<sup>67</sup> Christianity was not entirely without benefits for women, however. For the Christian widow the Church provided a surrogate for male family authority and restored the status she had had in her marriage (Lightman and Zeisel 1977: 29-30). The Church also gave support to women who did not wish to marry or who wished to leave their property to the Church or to the poor (instead of to their family) (Clark 1993: 6). Despite their misgivings on women as a source of temptation, men like Augustine occasionally cultivated individual aristocratic women, and Christian writers do give a good deal of attention to women in their writings, which of course is of more use to us as modern scholars than it was of benefit to women in their day.

### **Disempowerment**

Our ancient Christian literary sources regularly view 'woman' in the larger generic sense as a source of temptation or at least potential temptation, which would divert men from the 'true' path of devotion to God (Cameron 1993a: 128-9). Women's role in society was increasingly relegated to the domestic sphere, to complete obedience and subservience to husbands, and a diminished role in public life. Asceticism, in which women denied their femaleness, offered the only alternative to this.

#### **(i) the domestic sphere**

Augustine's letter to the matron Ecdicia is a good example of what constituted proper behaviour in a wife:

*Nihil ergo de tua veste, nihil de auro vel argento vel quacumque pecunia, rebus ullis terrentis tuis, sine arbitrio eius facere debuisti, ne scandalizares hominem qui deo tecum maiora voverat et ab eo quod de tua carne licita potestate posset exigere, se continenter abstinuerat.*

You had no right, therefore, to do anything with your garments, anything with your gold or silver or money or with any of your earthly property, without his approval, for fear of scandalizing a man who had joined you in vowing more important things to God and had continently refrained from what he had lawful authority to demand from your body. [Ep. 262.4]

Ecdicia had been practising conjugal continence against the wishes of her husband. Later in the same letter [262.5] Augustine points out that Ecdicia's gifts of money to some monks were inappropriate firstly since the recipients did not know Ecdicia, and secondly since Ecdicia was the wife of another man who was not present when she gave the money, nor was he even aware of her gifts. Augustine reminds her that a sexual bond is not the abiding essence of a Christian marriage. Augustine further states that a married woman cannot do what she likes with her own possessions, since she herself belongs to her head, her husband (... *ubi mulierum coniugatam non licet dicere: 'Facio quod volo de meo,' cum et ipsa non sit sua sed capitis sui, hoc est viri sui*) [Ep. 262.7], an interpretation based on Paul [1 Corinthians 11.3]. Thus in addition to legal obligations between husband and wife there were also moral obligations based on Christian ethics. Brown (1988: 403) interprets this incident as follows: Ecdicia had thought that when she and her husband no longer shared sexual relations (she adopts a widow's dress, for example) her marriage or marital obligations were at an end. Once she had defied her husband's authority over her body, she felt she could deny his authority in other matters such as property as well, so she took control over her own property which she gave to a group of wandering monks. But, as Brown points out, while this may have been acceptable in a radical tradition of Christian renunciation such as represented by the Acts of Judas Thomas, Ecdicia's gesture was a threat in a world where the security of the

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<sup>67</sup> A useful overview for the different attitudes in the societies of the Christian world is provided by BREMMER (1995): 'Pauper or patroness: the widow in the early Christian Church', dealing with the world of Jesus, the Greek, Roman and Syrian world.



Church depended on the authority of male heads of households.<sup>68</sup>

**(ii) control of women in the public sphere**

Not only was women's behaviour dictated by the Church fathers, but soon legislation was also enacted to regulate their actions. Nathan (2000: 58) demonstrates how the laws of Constantine diminished the legal capacity of a wife. One law that pertains specifically to Africa was that husbands should represent their wives in court.<sup>69</sup> Initially, as legal minors, women had not been able to represent themselves in court (Gardner 1986a: 165).<sup>70</sup> During the late 1<sup>st</sup> and early 2<sup>nd</sup> century AD, however, Pliny [*Ep.* 4.17, 7.6, 3.9, 3.11 and 9.13] tells of women in Rome bringing cases and, in the last two letters, of appearing in court as witnesses (he mentions no comparable cases from his governorship in Bithynia).<sup>71</sup> Women had become active participants rather than passive subjects to the law. Constantinian legislation ended that activity, although the intention was to protect their matronly modesty which would be compromised by attendance of male gatherings and trials [*Cod. Iust.* 2.12.21]. In 322 Constantine forbade women to bring their own actions [*Cod. Theod.* 9.1.3], although it is not certain that this law was ever enforced in the Western provinces (Nathan 2000: 58).

**(iii) role as deaconesses<sup>72</sup>**

The Church based its attitude to women on official current thinking: women were not suited to positions of authority, particularly over other men. Female church officials or deaconesses could at best teach other women and prepare them for baptism.<sup>73</sup> Deaconesses had a low ranking compared to men but it was the highest official status for women within the Church. They were, as Fantham *et al* (1994: 383) note, 'by no means priestesses'.<sup>74</sup> In addition the office of deaconess became more and more restricted to a certain group - only widows and virgins of mature age could aspire to this office (McNamara 1987: 119-120). Deaconesses also became the subject of a law in 390 [*Cod. Theod.* 16.2.27], stipulating that such women had to be over the age of 60 and must have children. She had to consign her property to her heirs and retain only her income, and could not make the Church, or anyone in it, her heirs. The law also restricted gifts from widows to clergy [*Cod. Theod.* 16.2.20].

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<sup>68</sup> Augustine had some difficulty in reconciling Christian ideals with practical realities. The motif of the unconsummated marriage is found often in ascetic literature. Victor Vitensis, for example, mentions Maxima and Martianus, two slaves who were apparently forced into marriage by the Vandals. Maxima also persuaded her husband to live in continence, by which, the author comments piously, they both saved their souls [*Hist. Persec.* 1.30-31].

<sup>69</sup> *Cod. Iust.* 2.12.21 (290-304?). It was addressed to the *consilium* of Africa.

<sup>70</sup> When in the time of Sulla, Maesia of Sentinum presented her own defence before the praetor, she earned the name 'androgynē' [*Val. Max.* 8.3]. On this aspect in the Roman context of Late Republic and Early Empire, see MARSHALL (1989): 'Ladies at law: the role of women in the Roman civil courts'.

<sup>71</sup> While governor in Bithynia Pliny dealt with two cases in which men's petitions involve women [10.59, 10.16] and in another the emperor's permission is requested to let his wife travel abroad [10.120]. For women testifying in court, see Paul, *Dig.* 22.5.3.5; 22.5.4; 22.5.18. Pudentilla also does not appear in court to confirm her intentions in her letter, why we do not know. Hunink (1997: 216) suggests that it is because 'Pudentilla's place is in the countryside, not in the forum', as Apuleius implies at 88.4. Others are brought forward to testify on her behalf, for example her guardian, a magistrate. In the *Apologia* [62.1] Apuleius' witness, Capitolina, is also not present in court and represented by her son. There was clearly no legal prohibition to their testimony in court. It is possible that attitudes in the provinces were more conservative than in Rome on this point. We just do not have enough information on provincial court cases - the examples given by Pliny are from Rome and Pliny was only in Bithynia for two years (AD 110-112). In Pudentilla's case Apuleius may have advised against her presence - certainly some parts of the court defence by Apuleius are less than flattering to her, for example *Apol.* 92.8, where he points out that a widow was a less attractive marriage bargain.

<sup>72</sup> A more detailed account on the role of deaconess can be found in MARTIMORT (1986): *Deaconesses: an historical study*.

<sup>73</sup> For a short summary on the deaconess in the Christian Church generally see KRAEMER (1992): *Her share of the blessings*, 174-209.

<sup>74</sup> Deaconesses are mentioned by Pliny in Bithynia - 'two slave women whom they call deaconesses' [10.96.8], but these had no standing outside their own church.



This reflected a long standing anxiety that religion made women vulnerable to men outside the family (Clark 1993: 55).<sup>75</sup> The law was later amended to allow clerics to be heirs if the woman died intestate and there were no other claimants (Nathan 2000: 127). Over the years further restrictions on women's roles in the Church were introduced. Justinian decided that deaconesses had to be at least 50 and *univirae* - if they had been married a second time they were too hot-blooded [*Nov. Iust.* 6.6 and 2.4]. Deaconesses lost their last sacramental function - baptizing women - when a sprinkling of water replaced the process of immersion (McNamara 1987: 119-120). At the end of our period (AD 692) the Council in Trullo held in Constantinople (in which no African bishops participated (Herrin 1992: 97) ordained that women were to remain completely silent during church services, even in the traditional responses, prayers and chants, in complete contrast to when in the 'early Christian centuries women had preached, prophesied, taught and expounded scripture' (Herrin 1992: 100).

### **Means of, and attempts at, empowerment**

The most available means of empowerment open to women in the Christian context was to deny their femininity, rejecting the body in general, and procreation in particular, as impediments to spiritual advancement.<sup>76</sup> By denying their sex women could aspire to becoming the equal of men at least in the spiritual sense.<sup>77</sup> Asceticism certainly brought a number of women from prominent families to the notice of the Church fathers. Augustine met some of the women of old and powerful Roman families who spent some time in Africa as refugees fleeing from the barbarian invasions of Rome. The fourteen year old Demetrias, the grand-niece of Petronius Probus, rejected a marriage alliance for the nunnery [*Jerome, Ep.* 130.6], and 'outdid the men of her family in the eyes of the delighted bishops' (Brown 1967: 340). By living as ascetics at home or travelling and establishing monasteries - rather than the traditional demands of marriage and children - women may in some cases have gained greater economic independence through Christianity, but this choice was limited chiefly to the wealthy élite,<sup>78</sup> although it is also known that as an alternative to marriage dedicating a daughter to God and monastic life could save parents the costs of providing them with dowries.<sup>79</sup> Augustine twice mentions that poor women also came to monastic life [*Ep.* 211.6 and *De Op. Monach.* 25]. The same advantages available to women like Demetrias or Melania were obviously not open to humbler women living a monastic life.

Through Augustine's letters to the convent at Hippo we have some insight into monastic life for women.<sup>80</sup> The

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<sup>75</sup> According to CLARK (1993): *Women in Late Antiquity*, 55, this was the reason why Jerome - who was of much lower status than his female followers such as Paula and Marcella - was asked to leave Rome [*Ep.* 45, *PL* 22.480-484].

<sup>76</sup> On Christianity and this type of female empowerment in antiquity see: ASPREGEN (1990): *The male woman: a feminine ideal in the early Church*; CAMERON (1980): 'Neither male nor female'; MEEKS (1973): 'The image of the androgyne: some uses of a symbol in earliest Christianity'; MILES (1991): 'Becoming male - women martyrs and ascetics'.

<sup>77</sup> In Perpetua's dream, for example, she is stripped naked for a boxing match and becomes a man - interpreted by some scholars such as DRONKE (1984): *Women writers of the Middle Ages: a critical study of texts from Perpetua (d. 203) to Marguerite Porete (d. 1310)*, 14, as a desire to become a man and not to be weak, like a woman.

<sup>78</sup> Certainly ALEXANDRE (1992): 'Early Christian women', 415, is speaking only of this élite in the following statement: 'The ascetic life promised liberation from the solitude and constraints of marital and family life; it promised autonomy as well as greater spiritual, intellectual and even emotional intensity; it offered possibilities of male friendship and foreign travel; it could bring fame and contacts in the secular world; and it could serve as a means of birth control and estate management'

<sup>79</sup> Not only pecuniary interests caused parents to devote their daughters to God. See for example a case mentioned by Augustine [*Ep.* 3] where a widow had vowed her daughter to the Church if the latter should survive a life-threatening illness, and now wished to release her daughter from a vow of virginity she had made on her behalf.

<sup>80</sup> Discussed in greater detail by DIESNER (1964): *Der Untergang der römischen Herrschaft in Nord Afrika*, 140-148.



institution had originally been under the supervision of Augustine's sister, but at her death had passed to a superior by the name of Felicitas with whom Augustine corresponded. Unfortunately we have rather little information on the actual authority of such women. It goes without saying that they must have had some authority over other women, but it would appear from the correspondence of Augustine that besides this they were still subject to male authority. What does become clear from the letter to Felicitas is that the other nuns seem to have rebelled against her authority, and Augustine's moral authority is asserted over them to bring them back to order [*Reg. Inform.*].

Clark (1981: 240) commences her article 'Ascetic renunciation and feminine advancement: a paradox of late ancient Christianity' by questioning why women would embrace the seemingly misogynistic environment created by the early Church. Although she concludes that monasticism was a social advancement for women, what sort of freedoms women gained from this is debatable. The law of Constantine in 320 [*Cod. Theod.* 8.16.1] allowed women to remain single without the penalties of Augustan legislation. Did they really have to become ascetics, in other words? Celibacy, while not an unknown concept for men or women in antiquity, was not particularly empowering in itself. Hickey (1987: 87 *passim*) takes the stance that ascetic monasticism as a choice was motivated by women's lack of integration in the normative structures and the ambiguity inherent in the expectations of women of the privileged status groups.

'It is my view that by the Late Empire the clash of cultures, pagan and Christian, created irresolvably incompatible images of women, affecting particularly those women whose aristocratic families spanned both cultures. Whereas in the general sense the pagan aristocratic culture held up images of woman as compliant wife, devoted mother and vehicle for preserving property, Christianity in a general sense clustered its praise around woman as martyr, ascetic and benefactress' (1987: 87).

While it is true that under asceticism and martyrdom the image of motherhood became controversial in the Christian context, this is hardly the case for a woman's role as benefactress, which the 'aristocratic' women of which Hickey is speaking had occupied since the beginning of the Empire. Roman culture itself, it is true, was somewhat ambiguous in reconciling women's public and domestic role, but this was not an ambiguity which sprang up with Christianity. Hickey underestimates the benefactress role of women in pagan culture, while the available evidence indicates that at least in Roman Africa this role actually diminished with Christianity.

While some prominence was given to female martyrs, cults devoted to martyrs and saints were a concession to the previously polytheistic local traditions of the ancient world. Female saints no more advantaged the situation for women than female goddesses had done in pagan times. The five women martyred at Scillium, a village near Thuburbo Minus in AD 180, definitely occupied second place to the seven men who died with them in the proceedings. They are, as Shaw comments, 'Not much in the way of an inspirational literary model' (1993: 17). Where women may have been given individual prominence, for example Perpetua, Felicity or Melania, ordinary women in general were in no way advantaged by their prominence. According to Shaw (1993: 13-14) in the Roman world in general male martyrs were celebrated at least four times as often as female martyrs. But compared to general Mediterranean trends, Shaw finds that African women 'represent a markedly higher proportion of all female saints'. According to Shaw's interpretation this was a reaction to a stronger bias against the lower public valuation of women in Roman African society than elsewhere in the Mediterranean. Shaw maintains that female martyrs reacted proportionately against this devaluation of their sex. Later female martyrs, for example the martyrs Maxima, Secunda and Donatilla, followed in the footsteps of women like



Perpetua and Felicity.<sup>81</sup>

The North African context did offer one opportunity to Christian women which occurred nowhere else and that was in the role of the 'confessor'. Confessors were those who had confessed their faith and were awaiting martyrdom in prison, but had been spared the ultimate fate or somehow managed to escape execution. The religious felt that the confessors, like the martyrs, could intercede with God on behalf of the apostates, as Perpetua in her vision had been able to intercede for her dead and unbaptized brother Dinocrates because of her pending martyrdom (*et cognovi me statim dignam esse et pro eo petere debere*) [*Passio P & F* 7.2].<sup>82</sup> Confessors therefore had the power to forgive sins, something which was seen as a clerical monopoly and the privilege of bishops. As such they were a trial to orthodox Church authorities like Cyprian, since they undermined their power and control.<sup>83</sup> Therefore 'martyrs and confessors had to be revered and celebrated - but also controlled' (Hopkins 1999: 114). From April AD 250, Cyprian attempted to centralize the authority of the bishops in the face of both the popularity of the martyrs/confessors and because of the challenge to his authority posed by the presbyters, who during his exile were assuming more power in the Church at Carthage [*Ep.* 13].<sup>84</sup> Cyprian arranged matters so that the martyrs and confessors in prison would become the teachers of the clergy [*Ep.* 15], hoping that because of his patronage of the former in the past, they would support him in his power struggle with the clergy (Bobertz 1991: 170-171). But confessorae at least were only a temporary nuisance, since they rose and disappeared with the persecutions. The martyrs were a more serious threat to episcopal authority, particularly in Africa where martyr worship was a dominant characteristic in the Church.

## CONCLUSION

It does not seem that the singular female figures which emerge from North African history - from legendary Dido to local heroine Kāhina - are an indication of the position of women in the Roman African context generally. Women benefited most from the advantages presented by Roman law and the gradual shift away from the dominant patriarchal agnatic family concept, which allowed women to inherit and dispose of their property with relative freedom.

Despite the critical writings of the African Church Fathers on the temptations presented by 'woman', and laws increasingly impeding women's access to public life, the old advantages of wealth and status still empowered some women, while the high proportion of female martyrs, is probably, as Shaw has suggested, a reaction against the restrictive attitudes and low valuation of women rooted in the indigenous African tradition.

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<sup>81</sup> *Passio SS. Maximae, Secundae et Donatillae*, in the *Analecta Bollandiana* IX, 1890, edited by C. DE SMEDT, pp. 110-116. See also the comments by MONCEAUX (1963.IV): *Histoire littéraire de l'Afrique chrétienne*, 148-150, who believes the text is apocryphal. The martyrdom allegedly took place in 304, but certainly the text, which is full of miraculous events such as bears refusing to touch the maidens in the arena and what Monceaux calls 'détails absurdes', is less realistic and believable than that of Perpetua.

<sup>82</sup> It was believed that the martyrs and confessors would sit with Christ at the Final Judgement [*Revelations* 7.14; 20.4; Origen, *Exhort. ad Mart.*; Tert., *Ad Mart.* 2; Cypr., *Ep.* 15].

<sup>83</sup> HOPKINS (1999): *A world full of gods*, 128, aptly calls the confessors 'loose canons in an increasingly hierarchical and institutionalised church'.

<sup>84</sup> This struggle between Cyprian for centralized authority is discussed by BOBERTZ (1991): *Cyprian of Carthage as patron: A social historical study of the role of bishop in the ancient Christian community of North Africa*, 149-174.





## CHAPTER 11

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# WOMEN AND THEIR WEALTH IN ROMAN AFRICA

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The preceding chapter has shown that under Roman law women could receive and own property. That they actually did so, and how much, will receive some attention here. Here the actual visible signs of wealthy women or women as property owners in their own right will be the focus, for it is these women who will also be central to the next two chapters, examining what women did with their wealth and why. Women as joint owners of property also receive attention since their access to wealth meant that they could also feature as benefactors to their communities.<sup>1</sup> The primary accent here will be on women as landowners. As Veyne (1987: 119) states: 'For the Greeks and Romans [mankind] began with the landowner'. Land invested its owner with status and wealth, whether male or female, and land ownership for women cannot be overestimated in a predominantly agricultural society such as North Africa. Even as late as the Byzantine period African landowners were still able to pay enormous sums of money to the Arabs at the time of the invasion (Christides 2000: 42).<sup>2</sup> Based on landed wealth Roman ranking into different orders facilitates our definition of relative prosperity for the early Empire, although of course wealth was not only invested in land. Evidence for other forms of capital investment such as trade is much less, but will also be looked at as an alternative, if less quantifiable, form of wealth.

### THE AGRICULTURAL WEALTH OF AFRICA

As mentioned in Chapter 2, in antiquity Africa was famed for her fertility. Was this, however, just a *topos*, or was Africa by Roman standards particularly fertile and hence a potential source of great wealth? Africa gained its reputation chiefly because from the 1<sup>st</sup> century AD it provided two-thirds of Rome's grain supply (Raven

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<sup>1</sup> We know of one case where a woman's wealth was artificially created by her husband, who put his property in her name to escape his creditors [Apul., *Apol.* 75.8]. In such an instance one can hardly take the woman as functioning in her own financial capacity, which is the type of activity examined in the following chapter, namely individual benefactions by Roman African women. It is unlikely that the activities practised by Rufinus' father were widely exercised, however, since in that event we would probably have had much more evidence for 'wealthy' women.

<sup>2</sup> Byzantine wealth in Africa is further proved by the numerous coin hoards indicating that gold coins circulated in the provinces up to the Arab invasion in the 7<sup>th</sup> century (Christides 2000: 23-24).



1984: 79-80). In reality, however, what was to be gained from the land depended on a number of factors such as topography and water access. Sallust [*Bell. Iug.* 17, 5-6] comments that land in the province of Africa and in Numidia was particularly fertile and good for crops. Towards the east, Tripolitania in climate and fertility lay somewhere between the Mediterranean and the Saharan conditions.<sup>3</sup> Towards the west, the Atlas mountains become more and more dominant, reaching their highest altitude of 13 500 feet in Mauretania Tingitana but also precipitating a fair amount of rainfall on the plains and coastal areas (see Figure 11.1 below). The mountain slopes were covered with conifer forests, holm oak and wild olive (Raven 1984: 5), while the plains offered suitable grazing for cattle (MacKendrick 1980: 295).

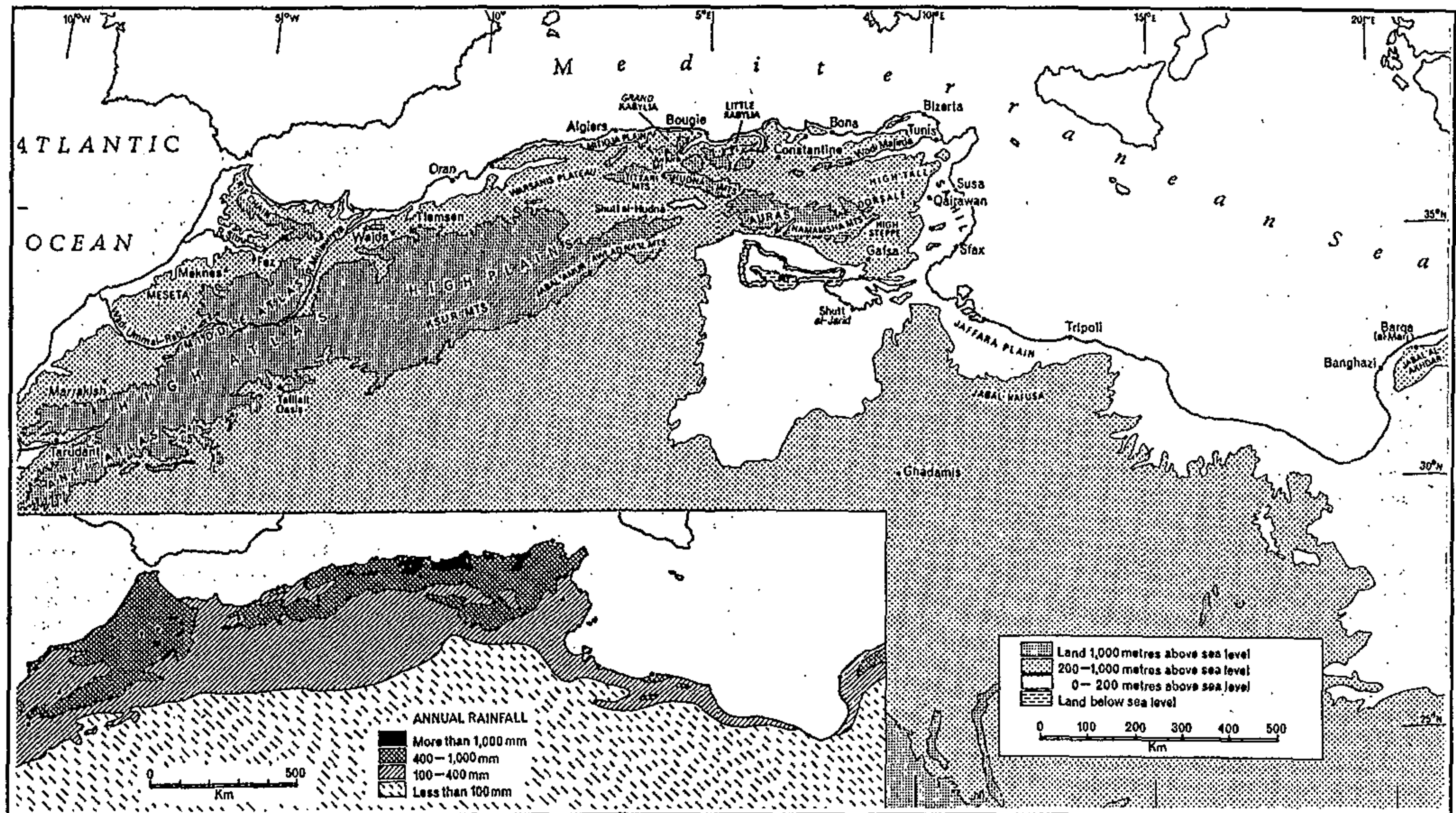


FIGURE 11.1 THE MAGHREB - RELIEF AND RAINFALL

But North Africa generally had a low rainfall and a number of unreliable seasonal streams and rivers - Sallust describes it as 'heaven and earth begrudging of water' (*caelo terraque penuria aquarum*) [*Bell. Iug.* 17.5-6] - as the map inset in the lower part of Figure 11.1 indicates.<sup>4</sup> Drought was not uncommon, as the literary and archaeological sources attest [for example *SHA: Hadrian* 22.10; *Cor., Ioh.* 6.247; (Mattingly 1994: 2)], and irrigation schemes were of great importance and value to the local farming communities such as at Lamasba (Shaw 1982a; 1984b).<sup>5</sup> Mattingly (1994: 2) concludes: 'The evidence seems, nevertheless, to suggest that Roman Africa developed agriculturally not as a result of higher rainfall, but through the careful control and management of the available water resources'. In real terms, therefore, Africa's 'fertility' consisted of the

<sup>3</sup> MATTINGLY (1994): *Tripolitania*, 1, defines this area as 'more immediately Saharan, although the long litoral imposes certain Mediterranean climatic nuances'.

<sup>4</sup> According to modern research the climate of Africa appears to have been much as it is today (Mattingly 1994: 1-16).

<sup>5</sup> The same evidence is discussed on a more superficial level by PAVIS D'ESCURAC (1980b): 'Irrigation et vie paysanne dans l'Afrique du nord antique'.



cultivated litoral from which Rome imported grain until Late Antiquity.<sup>6</sup>

### Land ownership and development

Not very much is known about land ownership before the Roman era. The area around Carthage appears to have prospered agriculturally before the Romans - Diodorus Siculus [20.8] mentions plantations and where the leading Carthaginians had their estates. These estates are not thought to have been very big, despite the fact that they were worked by slaves, since there is no evidence that a substantial part of the Carthaginian population, who were essentially traders, derived wealth from the land alone (Warmington 1969: 137). We know even less about the indigenous sedentary tribes. Cherry (1998: 18) surmises that among the native African population some land may have been privately held, and the rest worked communally.<sup>7</sup>

The Roman occupation brought a redistribution of land and regulation in the form of laws governing ownership and tenancy.<sup>8</sup> The indigenous population had usufruct of the land on which they had settled, now technically the possession of Rome, and on which they were taxed, possibly on both an imperial and a local level (Rives 1995: 104). The remainder of the land was considered as *ager publicus* and granted for example to Roman colonists and veterans, or to certain members of the equestrian and senatorial class in Rome. The first colonists were for example given 200 *iugera* (50 hectares) near Carthage. The agrarian law of 111 BC allowed them to lease or sell the land, and since most of them were unable to single-handedly farm such a large area, they probably rented portions to indigenous tenants.<sup>9</sup> Garnsey (1978: 230-231) estimates that about 10 000 such smallholders were established in formal colonies. Citizenship and gifts of land rewarded the Gaetuli who had fought for Marius [Caes., *Bell. Afr.* 56.3; 32.3; 35.4], and their farming descendants feature in inscriptions particularly from Uchi Maius, Mustis and Thugga. Veterans were given land by Augustus and later emperors.<sup>10</sup> Garnsey (1978: 230) estimates that during the Principate veterans may have received about 15 *iugera* (3.75 hectares) upon retirement, and in the 4<sup>th</sup> century they received 20 *iugera* (4 hectares). From these groups arose the decurial class, who owned properties of modest proportions, although possibly their collective wealth during the Principate may even have exceeded *saltus* of the few rich provincials in value (Garnsey 1978: 230). The latter were the *privati*, who had been permitted to carve out large estates from the areas confiscated from the Carthaginian and Libyan aristocracy (Garnsey 1978: 225). Many of these were absentee landlords, who either had always lived in Rome or who had left Africa for Rome to pursue their political ambitions as senators or

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<sup>6</sup> For a more detailed discussion on whether Africa was as fertile as the literature claims, see for example MAHJOURI ET AL (1981): 'The Roman and post-Roman period in North Africa', 482-484; STEBBING (1954): 'Forests, aridity and deserts'.

<sup>7</sup> Masinissa gave his sons estates 'well equipped with all the necessary appliances' (κεκοσμημένον πάσαις ταῖς κατασκευαῖς) [Diod. Sic. 32.16], which may under this definition have included human labour, whether enslaved or free tenants. On this see WHITTAKER (1978), 'Land and labour', 334.

<sup>8</sup> For example the *lex Manciana* and the *lex Hadriana*. These aspects are fully discussed in BROUGHTON (1968<sup>2</sup>): *The Romanization of Africa Proconsularis*, 19-29. See also p. 41 n. 79 above.

<sup>9</sup> See for example the sizes of the plots at Lamasba discussed below p. 250.

<sup>10</sup> Under Vespasian and his successors veteran colonies were established in strategic areas: the interior of Tunisia, southern Numidia and the eastern part of Mauretania (Garnsey 1978: 231). After Trajan imperial policy changed and no further veteran colonies were founded. CHERRY (1998): *Frontier and society in Roman North Africa*, argues against the settlement of veterans on the frontier. This area seems rather to have been given to tribesmen who patrolled the frontier under Roman officers. See also GARNSEY (1978): 'Rome's African empire', 231, on this point.



equestrians.<sup>11</sup> Sometimes provincials who went to Rome for political advancement returned to their estates at the end of their careers, but no African senators are known to have done so (Garnsey 1978: 227).<sup>12</sup> In the meantime the estates of absentee landlords were often run by *auctores*<sup>13</sup> or, if the family were of local origin, by close kin who had remained in the area, for example parents, brothers (as in the case of Lollius Urbicus [*ILAlg* II 3563]) or wives. The latter are clearly of greater interest in this context, and will be discussed more fully below. In these cases, the proceeds from the estates were normally reinvested in the local economy rather than being siphoned out by a senatorial career in Rome. Not all of equestrian or senatorial rank necessarily left the African provinces, however, since some remained to figure as part of the municipal élite of local towns (Duncan-Jones 1967: 160-165).<sup>14</sup>

As mentioned above, large estates were often subdivided into smallholdings and farmed by tenants. These *coloni* owed a percentage of their produce (rent plus tax) to their landlord, and six days of work at peak periods on the estate. At the Villa Magna Variana, for example, the peasants paid a third of their crops of wheat, barley, wine and oil, and a fourth of beans [*CIL* 25902, Hr. Mettich] (Garnsey 1978: 240).

During the 1<sup>st</sup> century AD the olive and wine growing industry of Africa (products with which Italy already dominated the Mediterranean market) was partially replaced with the cultivation of wheat [Pliny, *NH* 15.3.8], particularly in the broad river valleys of Africa and Numidia. The high plains and lowlands of Numidia were dominated by dry farming<sup>15</sup> and herding. As mentioned above, this part of the Maghreb was saved from total aridity by the massive mountains to the south, which afforded some precipitation and which made irrigation and runoff agriculture, also known as arid-zone irrigation farming, possible (Shaw 1982a: 63), particularly near springs and river beds. Numerous olive presses around towns like Lamsorti indicate one source of agricultural wealth in this type of landscape, while almond and fig trees, and even vines, were cultivated to a lesser extent.<sup>16</sup> The southern mountain slopes were also favourable for the cultivation of olives, and again there is evidence for presses in towns like Thuburbo Maius. But it is Tripolitania which appears, also from archaeological records of this commodity (Mattingly 1994), to have been the centre for olive production and export. The western plains of North Africa were suited to many types of agriculture - figs, olives, vines, wheat, maize and barley - as well as sheep and cattle farming, the latter particularly around towns such as Volubilis and Banasa.<sup>17</sup> At Banasa an

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<sup>11</sup> A general picture of the property requirements for certain status groups such as senators (HS 1 200 000), equestrians (HS 400 000) and municipal élites (HS 100 000) from Rome to the provinces has already been sketched in Chapter 2 (p.32). Some Romans are known to have possessed fortunes far in excess of even the senatorial requirement - Pliny the Younger is thought to have been worth about 20 million sesterces (Garnsey and Saller 1987: 64). The holder of property worth about 5 000 sesterces would then have been considered a relatively poor man, even though he may not have been one of the indigent mass.

<sup>12</sup> Those of equestrian status were apparently more likely to return after their imperial careers (Garnsey 1978: 229).

<sup>13</sup> There are several recorded instances of this, for example P. Iulius Proculus Celsinus, consul in Rome, who entrusted his estates near Cirta to a freedman [*ILAlg* II 638], or the Antistii at Thibilis, who produced consuls and generals *PIR*<sup>2</sup> A 754, 757, and also used freedmen to see to their affairs at home in Africa.

<sup>14</sup> Apuleius' father, for example, ex-duumvir at Madauros, had a fortune of 2 000 000 sesterces to leave between his two sons [*Apol.* 23.1], while the patrimony of Herennius Rufinus was apparently 3 000 000 sesterces [*Apol.* 75.8].

<sup>15</sup> Columella [*De Re Rust.* 5.4.2-5.9.13] describes 'dry farming' as follows: deep ploughing at least twice during summer but otherwise preserving the seal of the topsoil to conserve moisture, while ditches or banks were erected around trees to trap water during the winter months.

<sup>16</sup> On the financial profits from vines as opposed to other crops, see LESCHI (1947): 'La vigne et le vin dans l'Afrique ancienne'.

<sup>17</sup> Here sheep and cattle farming on a large scale are meant. Most peasant farmers had livestock for their own personal use (see for example Figure 7.31).



inscription honours the prefect of a Syrian cavalry squadron for rescuing the landowning élite (who dedicated the statue in his honour) from 'the usual lawlessness and cattle theft' (*solitis iniuriis, pecorumque iactura*) (MacKendrick 1980: 299). Volubilis also has substantial remains of olive presses, which is how 'these Berber-Roman tycoons made their money' (MacKendrick 1980: 304), at least before the city and its surroundings were destroyed by the Mauri between AD 274 and 280. Of all the crops grown on private land here again the most lucrative appears to have been the olive (Barker *et al* 1996: 245).<sup>18</sup> Coastal towns like Lixus and Volubilis had factories for making *garum*, a fish sauce for which there was a market in Rome, and factories appear to have remained in use until the 4<sup>th</sup> century (MacKendrick 1980: 290). Lixus, like Tingis and Septem, also had trade links with Spain across the Strait, and Lixus in particular was surrounded by a number of prosperous villas (MacKendrick 1980: 291).

### Political influences on land ownership and development

Occasional raids by tribesmen on border farms and even further into the heart of Roman territory were only one of the problems with which landowners had to deal. Strife between the *privati* and local municipal authorities was also fairly common (Garnsey 1978: 245), as well as disputes between municipalities of neighbouring territories [Tac., *Hist.* 4.50].<sup>19</sup> Such border disputes confirm that land in some areas was a highly desirable commodity. Africa was also subjected to political crises in which the confiscation or plundering of land was a serious hazard. During the persecutions many African Christians defected for fear of the seizure of their property [Cypr., *De Laps.* 10.1], and in succeeding centuries many Roman Africans of means fled the continent for centres like Rome or Constantinople when such crises occurred, as in the case of Fulgentius of Ruspe, who more than once was forced into exile to Sardinia under the Arian Vandals. Towards the middle of the 3<sup>rd</sup> century AD, after the defeat of Gordianus and his son, the emperor Maximinus exacted revenge on the Africans who had supported the Gordians by executing many of the leading Carthaginian citizens and plundering the countryside [Herdn. 7.177-233].<sup>20</sup> The economy worsened as production slowed to the extent that the inhabitants could no longer meet their tax obligations (Salisbury 1997: 155). The confiscation of land by Geiseric has already been mentioned, and also the return of some of the land under the more benevolent rule of Gunthamund. The vicissitudes of fortune which affected one such estate, the excavated rural complex at Nador (on the road between modern Cherchel and Tipasa), is briefly sketched by Potter (1995: 79). In the 4<sup>th</sup> century the estate was owned by M. Cincius Hiliarianus, *flamen Augusti* and Vetidia Impetrata, his wife.<sup>21</sup> By the early 5<sup>th</sup> century it was:

'extensively modified so that the 23 rooms or areas of the fourth century building were sub-divided up into no fewer than 57. It may have passed into the hands of a number of families, rather than an individual owner . . . Nador was clearly never the residence of an aristocratic owner (even though it was owned by such), and archaeology is silent about the identity of those who farmed there in the fifth

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<sup>18</sup> A number of calculations have been made to determine the financial gains from olive presses (Mattingly 1988; 1990; 1994: 138-140).

<sup>19</sup> Tacitus describes how Festus settled the differences between the people of Oea and Lepcis 'which, though small at first, beginning among these peasants with the stealing of crops and cattle, had now increased to the point of armed contests and regular battles' (*quae raptu frugum et pecorum inter agrestis modicis principiis, iam per arma atque acies exercebantur*).

<sup>20</sup> As discussed above, pp. 39; 85.

<sup>21</sup> A detailed discussion can be found in MATTINGLY AND HAYES (1992): 'Nador and fortified farms in north Africa', 408-418. The exact nature of such joint ownership is usually difficult to determine. Vetidia's share could have been the investment of her own capital, or her dowry, into the estate, or addition of land (her own or that provided by dowry).



century, whether they were Roman or Vandal. But it is striking that the early fifth century remodelling of the farm coincides chronologically with the rebuilding of the forum site at Cherchel, and that the two sites entered a demise at about the same time. This may be a coincidence, but it would be unrealistic not to allow for the possibility that these sites were affected by the Vandal annexation of the region and, a century later, by the Byzantine conquest'.

### **Standard of living**

What was measured as great wealth by African standards was not necessarily considered affluence by those in Rome. The surviving building costs collected by Duncan-Jones (1974: 63-113) show that in Africa there are not many costs for large buildings compared to the expenditure in Italy (1974: 120-223). On the other hand, Duncan-Jones has also estimated that living expenses in Africa were about half those in Rome.<sup>22</sup> Augustine too in the 4<sup>th</sup> century complained that in Milan they spent the greater part of the night in darkness, while in Africa olive oil to light lamps was abundant (Raven 1984: 96), but Pliny spoke scathingly of the quality of African olive oil and wine [*NH* 15.3.8]. It is possible therefore that in Carthage wealth may have gone a bit further here than in Rome, but that the luxuries available in Rome or later Constantinople were not as accessible.

## **SOME WEALTHY INDIVIDUALS IN THE AFRICAN CONTEXT**

### **The wealth of some African individuals**

A famous example of African wealth is related by the elder Pliny concerning the estates of six senatorial landowners said to have shared half of Africa among them [*NH* 18.35]. This is no doubt an exaggeration and also applies to absentee landlords (of whom the emperor was one, and a more substantial one after the sequestration of the land of the six senators).<sup>23</sup> By the 5<sup>th</sup> century imperial property in Africa Proconsularis and Byzacena formed about one sixth of the total area of these provinces. Under the Principate the other large concentration of imperial properties was built up in Mauretania Caesariensis around Sitifis (Garnsey 1978: 225). By contrast the territory of Cirta shows little sign of imperial estates across its considerable expanse of 10 000 square kilometres, and Garnsey (1978: 226) points out that 'it can be no accident that a city with such an extensive rural territory, the bulk of it apparently in private hands, was particularly productive of senators'.<sup>24</sup> Many of these private estates appear to have been of considerable size, sometimes even including villages grouped around the central villa. Garnsey (1978: 225) provides examples of this from Mauretania Caesariensis and suggests that such agglomerations were fairly common. If fortified these villas surrounded by settlements served as security while in a later age they were centres from which rebellious chiefs could mount their resistance to the Roman authorities, such as the *fundus* belonging to the aristocracy of the local Mazices in the Tenes Valley [*Amm. Marc.* 29.5.30-31]. Initially, at least during the 1<sup>st</sup> century AD, many private estates were owned by those who were not born in Africa, but gradually much of the land-owning aristocracy in Africa came

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<sup>22</sup> SLIM (1984): *Histoire de la Tunisie*, 177-184, is of the opinion that living standards in Africa Proconsularis were in many ways higher than in Italy, but the evidence for this seems rather scanty, since we do not have a volume of evidence for Roman Africans who were less well-off comparable to that which we have for Rome. It may be that the lower expenses calculated by Duncan-Jones allowed the wealthy inhabitants to live more royally.

<sup>23</sup> As elsewhere in the Empire, the imperial estates in Africa grew considerably through confiscations, inheritances, legacies and gifts (Garnsey 1978: 225).

<sup>24</sup> Only one known instance of an imperial estate in this area [*CIL* 18813].



to be of local origins. We know that Africa provided senators and equestrians for Rome who achieved their rank through property in Africa, sometimes acquired over generations. Septimius Severus must surely have had estates near Lepcis Magna, as Garnsey (1978: 226) suspects, since he does not appear to have owned much property in Italy [*SHA: Sept. Sev.* 4.5].<sup>25</sup> The territory of Lepcis Magna was one of the best olive growing districts in the Gebel, where the average annual rainfall reached 300 millimetres, while their neighbours at Oea and Sabratha had olive groves in a lower yield area. The wealth of the Sicinii and the Aemilii of Oea is attested by Apuleius, and one would imagine that the élite of Lepcis such as the Septimii Severi would be even wealthier (Birley 1988<sup>2</sup>: 28-29). There is also epigraphic evidence of individuals who possessed wealth in excess of the property requirement for their order. In the case of two *iudices* at Thugga, for example, their public gifts exceeded the minimum census for their class (Duncan-Jones 1967: 147-188, nr. 102 & 103). The small hill town of Thugga has provided a great deal of information about private euergetism (Duncan-Jones 1990: 174-184) and was surrounded by fairly substantial olive farms, presumably the source of its wealth (De Vos 1997: 201-208). At Madauros further to the south, also situated on the high plains and again typified by oleoculture as the main source of wealth, a member of the Gabinii family donated 375 000 sesterces for the construction of a theatre, which implies a personal fortune of several millions, even though the only equestrian in his family was a cousin [*ILAlg* I, 286] (Garnsey 1978: 230).

Late Antiquity in particular saw the building up of large estates. Land grabbing was common in the Late Empire when the rich were becoming more and more powerful. Their little oligarchies of power in Africa often co-opted the Church [Aug., *Serm.* 137.14], which was by Augustine's time itself the owner of substantial lands. At Hippo the estates of the Church were twenty times the size of Augustine's property at Thagaste, and Augustine in his role as bishop was the administrator [*Ep.* 125.1; 126.7; Possid., *Vita Aug.* 23.1-24.7]. Nevertheless in terms of wealth the contrast between Rome and Africa is illustrated by the visit of Melania and her family to the city of Thagaste in the 4<sup>th</sup> century AD [Aug., *Ep.* 124, 125, 126]. Melania's fortune clearly dwarfed that of any local aristocrat. Despite the prominence given to the abandonment of wealth by rich aristocrats such as Melania, this was certainly not common practice even among Christians.<sup>26</sup> African Christian writers when writing for pagans might hold that members of their congregation lived by the ideal of *frugalitas* and moderation, but when addressing their own congregations they had to rebuke the layman and woman for their avarice and lack of simplicity [Min. Felix., *Oct.* 36.3-4; Tert., *Ad Uxor.* 2.8.5].

## THE EVIDENCE OF THE POSSESSION OF WEALTH BY WOMEN

As the following pages will attest, a number of women in Roman Africa who were evidently affluent, although numerically speaking a far smaller number than that of wealthy men. In other cases women were perhaps not wealthy, but can be shown either to have been landowners in their own right, or at least were considered as

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<sup>25</sup> For the regulations regarding the possession of property outside Italy, see also GARNSEY (1978): 'Rome's African empire', 227.

<sup>26</sup> The *Vita Melaniae* comments that Thagaste was 'small and exceedingly poor' but that Melania so enriched the Church by her gifts that the other bishops became envious [21]. At the end of their stay in Africa she and her husband had 'renounced the whole burden of their riches' [*Vita* 35]. Melania's biographer paints the opposition of both families as another obstacle for these two ascetic Christians to overcome, opposition which is perfectly logical in a senatorial context, where the consolidation of property and wealth were of paramount importance.



equals with their husbands in contracts concerning property.<sup>27</sup> Women's legal capacity to inherit property from their families through dowry and inheritance certainly benefited them, while they were not as directly liable for the costs of public life to which their male counterparts were often subject (for example entry fees upon municipal office or *summae honorariae*).<sup>28</sup> In the example of Melania and Pinianus it is the latter who is accosted by the townsfolk and not Melania herself [Aug., *Ep.* 126].<sup>29</sup>

The evidence which will be examined here will be direct evidence of personal wealth - estates, villas, costly tombs, jewellery or specific literary references to monetary worth such as we have in the case of Pudentilla. There is also the evidence of expenditure, such as benefactions of specific amounts, but this will be left for Chapter 12.

### General indications of women's wealth and status

There is some evidence for women from the wealthiest order, *clarissimae feminae*, in the African provinces, although not all of these were resident in Africa (indicated for example by funerary epitaphs indicating they were buried there) but connected through patronage of African communities.<sup>30</sup> In some cases, for example, it is likely that women of this status group were not born in Africa but arrived with their husbands appointed to office:

CONSTANTINE (CIRTA) [AE 1917-1918, 75 = 1992, 1868]

VOLUMNI | AE MODES | TAE C(LARISSIMAE) F(EMINAE) | CONIUGI M AUR(ELII) COMINI CASSIANI.

To Volumnia Modesta, woman of the senatorial class, wife of Marcus Aurelius Cominus Cassianus.

M(arcus) Aur(elius) Cominus Cassianus was the legate in Numidia [*ILAlg* II, 617] around AD 247-248.

Some earned their senatorial title by birth:

HAÏDRA (AMMAEDARA)

[AE 1993, 1734]

IULIAE FLAVIAE HERENNIAE | CAECILIAE HONORATIANAE OPTATAE C(LARISSIMAE) P(UELLAE) FILIAE | FL(AVI) POLLIONIS FLAVIANI C(LARISSIMI) V(IRI) | CUR(ATORIS) REI P(UBLICAE) PRAET(ORIS) K(ANDIDATI) | [D(ECRETO)] D(ECURIONUM) P(ECUNIA) [P(UBLICA)].

To Iulia Flavia Herennia Caecilia Honoratiana Optata, girl of the senatorial class, daughter of Flavius Pollonius Flavianus,<sup>31</sup> senator, curator of the *res publica*, praetorian candidate, by the decree of the decurions with public money.

<sup>27</sup> For comparison see HOBSON (1983): 'Women as property owners in Roman Egypt'. Information from Roman Africa has not been as prolific on the subject of women as property owners.

<sup>28</sup> This is not meant to imply that there were more wealthy women than men, but perhaps that in some cases conditions were conducive to creating the situation against which Tertullian and Corippus rail so rhetorically [Tert., *Apologet.* 6.4-6; Cor., *Ioh.* 3.369-375]. Even in Late Antiquity there were still echoes of an earlier Roman attitude to women and property: 'It was seen as an imbalance in [Republican] society if any women controlled larger estates than men of the same class' (Fantham *et al* 1994:263).

<sup>29</sup> Augustine relates in a letter to Albina [*Ep.* 126] how the husband of Melania the Younger, Pinianus, would have become a priest by popular demand of the plebs, but that Pinianus had asked Augustine not to appoint him to this office despite their demands. SHAW (1982c): 'The elders of Christian Africa', 220, comments 'The issue was simple: Pinianus, as a wealthy man, would be a valuable catch for the *plebs* who like to exploit ecclesiastical office as a method of enrolling patrons'. Augustine's letters [125-128] to Alypius and Albina hold Pinianus to his oath and repudiate the charge of avarice on the part of the Church. The matter became irrelevant when Pinianus lost his property, and the people of Hippo let the matter drop.

<sup>30</sup> At least forty *clarissimae feminae/puellae* are known from inscriptions found in the African provinces: *CIL* 1181 (two women); 1123; 2665; 2748; 7043; 7054; 7055; 7063; 7065; 7977; 8326; 11336; 11337; 11536; 12545 = *AE* 1993, 1748; 14038; 14470; 18271; 19914; 20410; 20908; 21003; 23832; 23935; 25990; 26273; 26578; 26583. *ILA* 414, 454 and 511. *ILS* 388. *AE* 1964, 179; *AE* 1967, 595 & 648; *AE* 1987, 1078; *AE* 1992, 1868; *AE* 1993, 1734; *AE* 1995, 1653. For the Roman Empire as a whole see RAEPSAET-CHARLIER (1981): 'Clarissima femina', 189-212, and also NICOLS (1989): 'Gender and civic patronage' for senatorial women's involvement in especially Roman Africa. Senatorial patronage by women is discussed in the following chapter.

<sup>31</sup> Flavius Pollionis Flavianus was originally from Africa [*AE* 1993, 1734].



This can be linked with another inscription erected by the town:

CARTHAGE

[CIL 12545; AE 1993, 1748]

RANIAE FLAVIAE IULIANAE OPTATAE C(LARISSIMAE) F(EMINAE) | MATRI FLAVIORUM | FLAVIANI C(LARISSIMI)  
P(UERI) ET OPTATAE C(LARISSIMAE) F(ILIAE) ET FLAVIANILAE C(LARISSIMAE) P(UELLAE) COL(ONIA)  
AMMAED(ARENSIUM) S(UA) P(ECUNIA) F(ECIT).

To Rania Flavia Iuliana Optata, woman of the senatorial class, mother of the Flavii of Flavianus, sons of the senatorial order, and of Optata, daughter of the senatorial order, and Flavianilla, girl of the senatorial order. The colonia of Ammaedara erected this with their own money.

The tombstone of another young woman who died at the age of 18 [AE 1967, 648] in AD 425 also claimed senatorial status, but this seems to be in some doubt since she is simply styled 'Victoria', highly unusual in the case of a *clarissima femina*.

Others possibly became *clarissimae feminae* by marriage if they were not already of this order. In neither case does this necessarily establish women as prosperous in their own right, but at least for the purposes of Chapter 12 which looks at female benefactions, we may include them as having access to capital and as being subject to a certain obligation regarding euergetism. *Clarissimae feminae* often belonged to families with long traditions of *liberalitas* in one or more communities. The Pomponii of Cuicul, for example, were known for their wealth and munificence. Pomponius Pudentianus, *flamen perpetuus*, built a basilica for the town between 364 and 367, further embellished by Pomponius Rusticus, *vir honestus* [CIL 8347]. Pomponia Rusticula [1967, 595] was probably the daughter of the latter (the inscription is dated to 452), but her death at the age of fifteen is not likely to have ever given her the opportunity to fulfil this family tradition.<sup>32</sup> In other instances *clarissimae feminae* are known to have been *patronae* in either a private (Gaia Sulpicia Dymiana at Utica [AE 1964, 179]) or a public (Calpurnia Ceia Aemilia at Thibicae [AE 1995, 1653]) capacity (the latter is indicated by the presence of the phrase *d(ecreto) d(ecurionum)*, indicating some municipal involvement).<sup>33</sup>

In the equestrian status group our main source of evidence is the *Apologia*. Apuleius tells us that Pudentilla possessed four million sesterces and from the following context we know that this must have been a fairly large fortune for provincial African society of the day:

*avus modicum reliquerat, mater sestertium quadragies possidebat*

His grandfather had left but a moderate fortune - his mother, however, possessed four million sesterces. [Apol. 71.6] Clearly four million sesterces was more than just a 'moderate fortune'. Pavis D'Escurac (1974: 92) maintains that the enormity of Pudentilla's wealth is corroborated by the penniless state of her relatives. It is of course in Apuleius' interest to portray Pudentilla's relatives as poor and in debt and consequently imbued with avaricious ulterior motives in accusing him, so the value of this comparative evidence is somewhat dubious. But Apuleius did clearly want to impress upon his audience that he had not married Pudentilla for her money, and from this we can deduce that his references to her wealth would not be exaggerated, even if he does not undervalue her fortune. Despite Hunink's scepticism about using details from the speech as evidence for certain elements of North African economic life, he does admit that Pudentilla was undoubtedly a very wealthy woman: 'If such opulence [the gifts of Pudentilla to her sons at Apol. 93.3-6] is merely an 'advance' and a friendly gesture, one starts to realize what huge interests were at stake in this trial' (1998: 285-286).

<sup>32</sup> But see Appendix A, nr. 19, for a priesthood given to another fifteen year old. The inscription is also discussed by COURTOIS (1954): *Les Vandales et l'Afrique*, 371 nr. 35.

<sup>33</sup> The nature and extent of such patronage is discussed in Chapter 12.



There is other less direct and detailed evidence of female wealth. The tomb portrait of Aelia Arisuth referred to earlier depicts a woman of some wealth and local status by the expense and care which has been lavished on the portrait itself.<sup>34</sup> In its central position it is being supported by two figures, while outside the niche two other figures seem to be holding candles to symbolically illuminate her portrait. Aelia's dress and jewels emphasize her status, although these are not as magnificent as that displayed in some mosaics, for example that of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century martyr Perpetua, or of Monica (Figures 13.2 and 7.26 respectively). No jewellery attesting her affluence was found with the bones, but this is not unusual since in Roman antiquity women were not buried with jewels unless their impending nuptials had been cut short by death.<sup>35</sup> In her burial Aelia Arisuth certainly appears very Romanized.<sup>36</sup> Despite her relatively modest attire, Aelia is clearly the more important incumbent of the tomb. Her niche is the larger of the two, more lavishly decorated and the decorations lead the eye inward to her central portrait.



FIGURE 11.2 FUNERARY NICHE OF AELIUS MAGNUS/MAXIMUS

In comparing Aelia's niche to that of her husband, Aelius Magnus or Maximus, Romanelli (1922: 414) is rather unflattering about the inferior execution of the latter. He speaks of 'tale trasandata imperizia' and 'barbaro lavoratore di pennello'. The occupant of this smaller niche, is depicted in the fresco above the funerary hollow in a relaxed attitude under a tree,

surrounded by images of plenty - vine leaves, bunches of grapes and roses, images commonly associated with the afterlife.<sup>37</sup> From the little we can see he is wearing the same dalmatian tunic as the candle-bearers painted outside the niche of Aelia Arisuth (Figure 7.25), with the same decoration, but he is booted while the other two figures wear sandals. This seems to be his only claim to status. Otherwise, as pointed out earlier, Aelius' leisure is in sharp contrast to the alert and dignified figure of Aelia Arisuth, who is clearly the dominant personality in the tomb.<sup>38</sup> These features proclaim her to be a member of the local élite of Oea, whose wealth was possibly based on the fact that this town had since Punic times been a port for the products of the trans-Saharan caravans, or otherwise possibly in the olive industry of the area.<sup>39</sup>

<sup>34</sup> See Chapters 4 and 7 (Figures 4.3; 7.22).

<sup>35</sup> In this respect native African custom was somewhat different. A famous example today is the 4<sup>th</sup> century tomb of Tin Hinan, believed to have been the queen of the Garamantes, who was buried with her jewellery at Abalessa. On Roman practices see also MARTORELLI (2000): 'Clothing in burial practice in Italy in the early Christian period'.

<sup>36</sup> This is also borne out by the manner of her burial as discussed in Chapter 8, p. 187.

<sup>37</sup> It is true that a poet's *otium* is a desirable quality in Catullus and the elegists, but this is a poet's rejection of the material values of a Roman political career.

<sup>38</sup> See pp. 74; 152-153; 182.

<sup>39</sup> A general discussion on trade in the area in FULFORD (1989): 'To east and west: the Mediterranean trade of Cyrenaic and Tripolitania in Antiquity'.



Another wealthy tomb which has already been mentioned is that of Cornelia Urbanilla at Lambiridi (Figure 8.4), near Cirta, discussed by Dunbabin (1978: 139-40). Also in this instance the memorial indicates more than just another tomb set up to a woman by a rich husband. Cornelia Urbanilla is clearly an example of a woman who was not only wealthy but left her mark as an individual personality, marked in this case by her philosophical or religious interest in life.

The Christian context also provides evidence for well-to-do women in Roman Africa. Although we must allow for a rhetorical slant, Tertullian does appear to have known rich Christian women. There would hardly be much point in railing against women draped in pearls and emeralds to the urban poor [*De Cult. Fem.* 2.13.3-5]. From the general tenor of his writings it is quite clear that he detects tension between earthly wealth and the Christian faith, particularly where wealth entailed some sort of involvement in municipal life [*De Idol.* 18]. Cyprian too addresses his *De Habitu Virginum* to wealthy women, in this case those who had made vows of chastity. These women clearly figured in the Church as individuals since they lived off their own income and not on Church alms. Monastic life for women (of which our earliest African example is provided by Augustine's sister) afforded an alternative to marriage and motherhood while women could still own property and enact property transactions. Abandonment of earthly wealth was not generally advocated for lay Christians during the period under discussion.<sup>40</sup> Bishops like Augustine were certainly well aware of the materialistic aspects of class and status. On one occasion a young girl had been made a ward of the Church with Augustine as her guardian [*Ep.* 253; 254]. The girl was not lacking in suitors and her uncle by marriage (on her mother's side of the family) as well as both Augustine and Benenatus, Bishop of Tugutiana, were all concerned in her potential marriage. All this concern, and the status of the parties which expressed it, implies that she was well-born and probably affluent.

### Quantifiable elements of wealth for women

#### (i) inherited/invested capital - land and other property

It is not possible to always determine the exact or even the relative value of an estate at a particular time, even when it is known where the property lay, as this was dependant on a number of factors such as its size, the type of cultivation and the climate (not to mention other agricultural hazards which even modern science has not managed to eliminate). Intimations of the size of the estate and the status of the person concerned are usually key indicators that a large fortune was invested in the estate.

Some evidence from second half of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century indicates that it was not only men who were absentee landlords. In one of his letters to Marcus Aurelius [*Ep.* 2.16], Fronto refers to the *saltus* or estate of Matidia, the emperor's great aunt, which was left to the emperor on her death,<sup>41</sup> and the estates of Melania<sup>42</sup> must clearly have been managed by an agent while she was in Rome. Absentee landlords were not necessarily situated in

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<sup>40</sup> This is the general contention of COUNTRYMAN'S work (1980): *The rich Christian in the Church of the Early Empire*.

<sup>41</sup> Forty years later during the reign of Severus Alexander some dispute arose over the boundaries of this estate [*CIL* 8812], which was situated in the neighbourhood of modern Bou Areridj, and the steward engaged a land surveyor to define the boundaries, which is still referred to as the estate of Matidia. The inscription recording this ends with a dedication by the *coloni* of Kasturrensis to the emperor.

<sup>42</sup> Παραγενάμενοι δὲ ἐκεῖσε εὐθέως πωλοῦντες τὰ κτήματα ἐν τῇ Νουμιδίᾳ καὶ Μαυριτανίᾳ καὶ ἐν αὐτῇ τῇ Ἀφρικῇ. (When they arrived there, they immediately sold their landed property in Numidia, Mauretania and in Africa itself) [*Vita Mel.* 20]. Apart from the estate near Thagaste discussed below, we are not told the location of any of these estates.



Rome, however. Some resided in large metropoleis such as Cirta, as in the case of an unnamed patroness to whom three *coloni* on an estate near modern Kherbet 'Abd-er-Rhamân erected a dedicatory inscription [CIL 4465 = 18594].<sup>43</sup>

But again in terms of landed property our best documented example is that of Pudentilla. One of Pudentilla's assets seems to have been situated about 150 kilometers from Sabratha<sup>44</sup> - Apuleius tells us that the slave Thallus went away into the country to the estate *ad centesimum lapidem* [Apol. 44.6]. Pudentilla's country estate must have had a villa which was suitable for country retreats, since it is occasionally mentioned in this context [Apol. 67.4; 78.3; 88.1; 87.9]. She may also have had property in the *territorium* of Lepcis Magna, since Apuleius was engaged in defending an action brought against Pudentilla by the Granii [Apol. 1.3] who came from Lepcis<sup>45</sup> when he was informed of the case against him. Possibly the case against Pudentilla may have had something to do with a border dispute. Apuleius remarks at 15.4 on 'the man disputing the boundaries of lands' (*de finibus agrorum litiganti*) and this may well refer back to this case. There is also the piece of land which Pudentilla purchased for 60 000 sesterces, but about which we have no other information [Apol. 101.5]. We have a few details about the land which Pudentilla donated to her sons [Apol. 93.4-5]:

*Suasi uxori meae, cuius, ut isti aiunt, iam universas opes transvoraram, suasi, inquam, ac denique persuasi, ut filiis pecuniam suam reposcentibus - de quo supra dixeram - ut eam pecuniam sine mora redderet in praedis vili aestimatis et quanto ipsi volebant, praeterea ex re familiari sua fructuosissimos agros et grandem domum opulente ornata magnamque vim tritici et ordeï et vini et olivi ceterorumque fructuum, servos quoque haud minus CCCC, pecora amplius neque pauca neque abiecti pretii donaret, ut eos et ex ea parte quam tribuisset securos haberet et ad cetera hereditatis bona spe[i] invitaret.*

I urged my wife, whose whole fortune according to my accusers I had by this time devoured - I urged her and finally persuaded her, when her sons demanded back the money of which I spoke above, to pay over the whole sum at once in the shape of farms, at a low valuation and at a price suggested by themselves, and further to surrender from her own private property certain exceedingly fertile lands, a large house richly decorated, a great quantity of wheat, barley, wine and oil, and other fruits of the earth, together with not less than four hundred slaves and a large number of valuable cattle.

It is Apuleius' intention here to create an impression of Pudentilla's generosity to her sons, not, for example as Hunink (1998: 285) puts it regarding the numbers of slaves, to give 'an account of her workforce'. On the other hand, there is no indication that these generous donations were a real sacrifice on Pudentilla's part in the sense that her own properties were substantially diminished, and we may imagine that if this had been the case Apuleius would have lost no opportunity in emphasizing this motherly devotion. In reference to the figure of 400 slaves, Duncan-Jones (1974: 347) estimates that the original slave body could have been no less than 600 men,<sup>46</sup> but this figure is probably too conservative, since it would probably not have been agriculturally viable

<sup>43</sup> Similarly in Tripolitania the evidence suggests that most of the landowners resided in luxury villas near the coast, while their estates were designed as working farms without 'an elegant *pars urbana* to provide the occasional country retreat for the owner' (Barker *et al* 1996: 283). See also n. 59 of this chapter on the absentee owners of the villa in the Julius mosaic.

<sup>44</sup> A short summary of the evidence is given by LASSÈRE (1977): *Ubique populus*, 314 n.9.

<sup>45</sup> For the Granii see IRT 532; 642; 708; 709; PIR<sup>2</sup> G 206; 209.

<sup>46</sup> As mentioned in Chapter 9, it is generally agreed that large-scale slave labour was not often used in Roman Africa (Decret and Fantar 1981: 227, Garnsey and Saller 1987: 111). But a large *familia rustica* may not have been entirely out of the ordinary among the Roman African élite. Petronius [117.8] in the context of the 1<sup>st</sup> century AD mentions a fictional trickster who claimed a gang of slaves in Numidia large enough to capture Carthage. On the use of extensive slave labour on African estates see PAVIS D'ESCURAC (1974): 'Pour une étude sociale de l'Apologie de Apulée', 92 and GUTSFELD (1992): 'Zur Wirtschaftsmentalität nichtsenatorischer provinzieller Oberschichten: Aemilia Pudentilla und ihre Verwandten', 253-4.



for her to have given away two-thirds of her slave body and still maintain her own property.<sup>47</sup> He also estimates that if, as is likely, the bulk of Pudentilla's four million was invested in land, the land must have been worth about three million sesterces (while the rest consisted of slaves, houses and so on). If two-thirds of her slaves were adult agricultural slaves, then 400 slaves worked HS 3 million worth of land. Duncan-Jones then uses the figures provided by Columella and other agrarian writers for the manpower required to cultivate grain, olives and wine (the products mentioned in the extract quoted above) to arrive at the conclusion that about 8 000 *iugera* (2 200 hectares) were under cultivation.<sup>48</sup>

Not least amongst Pudentilla's assets Apuleius mentions cattle in the above extract, and that these were of some value. We know virtually nothing about cattle farming in this area apart from this reference, although animal farming on a smaller scale was common practice. Archaeological finds for such farming in this area, however, have been very limited and inclined more to sheep and goat farming (Barker *et al* 1996: 227-263).<sup>49</sup>

The *Apologia* in general portrays Pudentilla as an independent character in her own right in the eyes of all the other role-players.<sup>50</sup> Certainly she is portrayed as having a hands-on approach to business matters:

*neget eam rationibus villiconum et upilionum et equisonum sollertissime subscripsisse*

Let him deny that she showed the utmost shrewdness in her examination of the accounts of the bailiffs, grooms and shepherds ...

[*Apol.* 87.7]

Clearly men's advice in the management of money and estates was not essential. The law allowed many women to sign contracts and transact business virtually without supervision, so it is therefore plausible that Pudentilla could supervise the management of her own estates. Estate-management could involve many other supervisory activities, either monitoring the overseer or steward, or supervising planting, or ensuring that products were sold at the best price. But usually owners of substantial properties, women as well as men, were not actively involved in managing their estates if they had reliable underlings to take care of things.<sup>51</sup> It seems that Pudentilla managed her affairs very well in the profit-making sense of management. In her fourteen years of widowhood she had in fact augmented the fortune left to her by her first husband:

*hereditatem avitam .... eandem summa industria auxisse.*

...his grandfather's fortune, a fortune to which she had by the exercise of the greatest care made considerable additions...

[*Apol.* 70]

Apuleius is of course keen to advertise Pudentilla's skills in managing her own finances so that she may appear independent of his influence, and level headed enough not to be under any magic spell. Even if Apuleius' information is exaggerated, however, it is not totally without merit, since if it had been highly unusual for a

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<sup>47</sup> Even though their status may not necessarily have affected the standard of living of the individuals who worked the estate, tenants were regarded as a different type of asset to slaves, which could be bought and sold. GSELL (1932): 'Esclaves ruraux dans l'Afrique romaine', 399, estimated that the monetary worth of Pudentilla's slaves was about 800 000 sesterces, one fifth of her total capital. His calculation, however, is based on the calculation of the price of slaves from the *forma censoria*, which is not related to prices in Africa nor to the period of the second century, and the general calculations of DUNCAN-JONES (1974): *The economy of the Roman Empire*, 248-251, indicate that prices in Italy are not necessarily related to those in Africa.

<sup>48</sup> The price of Pudentilla's land may have been about HS 390 per *iugerum* (Duncan-Jones 1974: 348)

<sup>49</sup> But see above n.17 in this chapter. Also LEVEAU (1988): 'Le pastoralisme dans l'Afrique antique'.

<sup>50</sup> However, we may again note that Pudentilla was prevented from remarrying by her father-in-law, who feared that his grandsons might lose their inheritance. Only by falling ill due to the deprivations of widowhood did she have the opportunity to remarry.

<sup>51</sup> Employing bailiffs to manage the estate while the owner resided in the city was a widespread custom for men also - LEVEAU (1984): *Caesarea de Maurétanie*, 189, notes that the rural villas around Iol Caesarea lacked the usual characteristics of aristocratic incumbent families (for example a *pars urbana*), indicating that they preferred to live in town and had bailiffs to run their estates.



woman of Pudentilla's age and wealth to undertake such measures the information would have damaged the credibility of his argument rather than enhanced it.

In another example we can already deduce that the Numidian property of Antonia Saturnina at 'Aïn Mechira [CIL 8280 = ILS 6869] must have been considerable from the fact that she introduced a village (*vicus*) and a twice monthly market on her estate.<sup>52</sup> As discussed above, large villa-based estates often incorporated such villages.<sup>53</sup> Antonia Saturnina was a member of the local aristocracy, and the aunt of *clarissimi viri*.<sup>54</sup> She had been married to C. Arrius Pacatus, a wealthy senator, and her autonomous action is the result of the fact that her husband had predeceased her [CIL 7032 = ILS 616]. Vast estates were also owned by Valeria Atticilla [ILT 1653] near Ammaedara (Romanelli 1959: 322), as well as by another African woman already mentioned, the otherwise unnamed owner of the *fundus Cornelianus* [Dig. 33.7.27.1] (Garnsey 1978: 237).<sup>55</sup>

In a letter to Fabiola the Younger<sup>56</sup> in Rome [Ep. 20 (Divj.)] Augustine mentions another woman, relating her wealth and influence at some length, probably for the purpose of impressing Fabiola with the status of his *patrona*. He further describes her as illustrious and as the one who had the final say on her estate. This is proved by events involving Augustine's former protégé, the young bishop Antoninus, who had disgraced himself by his bad behaviour and had been removed from his bishopric by Augustine and the Council of the Numidian Catholic Church.<sup>57</sup> Antoninus was subsequently relegated to a smaller congregation at the *fundus* Thogonoetensis, the property of the *patrona* whom Augustine is referring to. The *coloni* of the *patrona*'s estate were against giving the position to Antoninus and sought her aid to avert it, and she clearly had the authority to prevent or approve the appointment.<sup>58</sup> In a letter to Augustine the *patrona* related that Antoninus was attempting to manipulate the situation, and Augustine tells Fabiola that he carried this letter on his person, so valuable was it as evidence against Antoninus. Although the *patrona* is not given a name, she was evidently the owner of a substantial estate and a woman of some wealth, status and authority.

On Melania's estate near Thagaste, which the Latin *Vita* tells us was larger than the town itself, we are told that there were baths (possibly much like the baths illustrated behind the villa in Figure 11.3 below), and that many workers in gold, silver and copper were employed there (Clark 1984: 190). The estate also housed two bishops: *duos episcopos, unum nostrae fidei et alium haereticorum*. ('two bishops, one for our faith and another for the heretics', by which presumably the Donatists were meant). Clark (1984: 190) surmises that this was because Melania and Pinianus did not want a repetition of the slave uprising that had occurred on their Roman estates

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<sup>52</sup> The exact nature of Antonia Saturnina's benefactions to the people on her estate is discussed in Chapter 12, pp. 266-267, but see also generally DE LIGT (1993): *Fairs and markets in the Roman Empire: economic and social aspects of periodic trade in pre-industrial society*.

<sup>53</sup> See above p. 239.

<sup>54</sup> See below p. 267.

<sup>55</sup> The *Codex Iustinianus* [6.38.1] mentions two instances of women running large estates dating to AD 213, describing at length one of the estates which yielded oil and wine for the market at the disposal of the *mater familias*. Unfortunately we are not informed as to where in Africa these estates lay. The *fundus Cornelianus* is also referred to above, p. 210.

<sup>56</sup> Fabiola was known to both Augustine and Jerome. Augustine wrote to her on another occasion [Ep. 267] and Jerome sent her two books from his commentary on Ezekiel [Aug., Ep. 165.2.2].

<sup>57</sup> The details of the ecclesiastical politics surrounding this issue are discussed by FRENCH (1983): 'The Divjak letters', 504-507.

<sup>58</sup> Priests attached to estates or living and preaching on them are known from elsewhere, for example the *Vita Fulgentii* [6] and see also the reference to Melania's estate below.



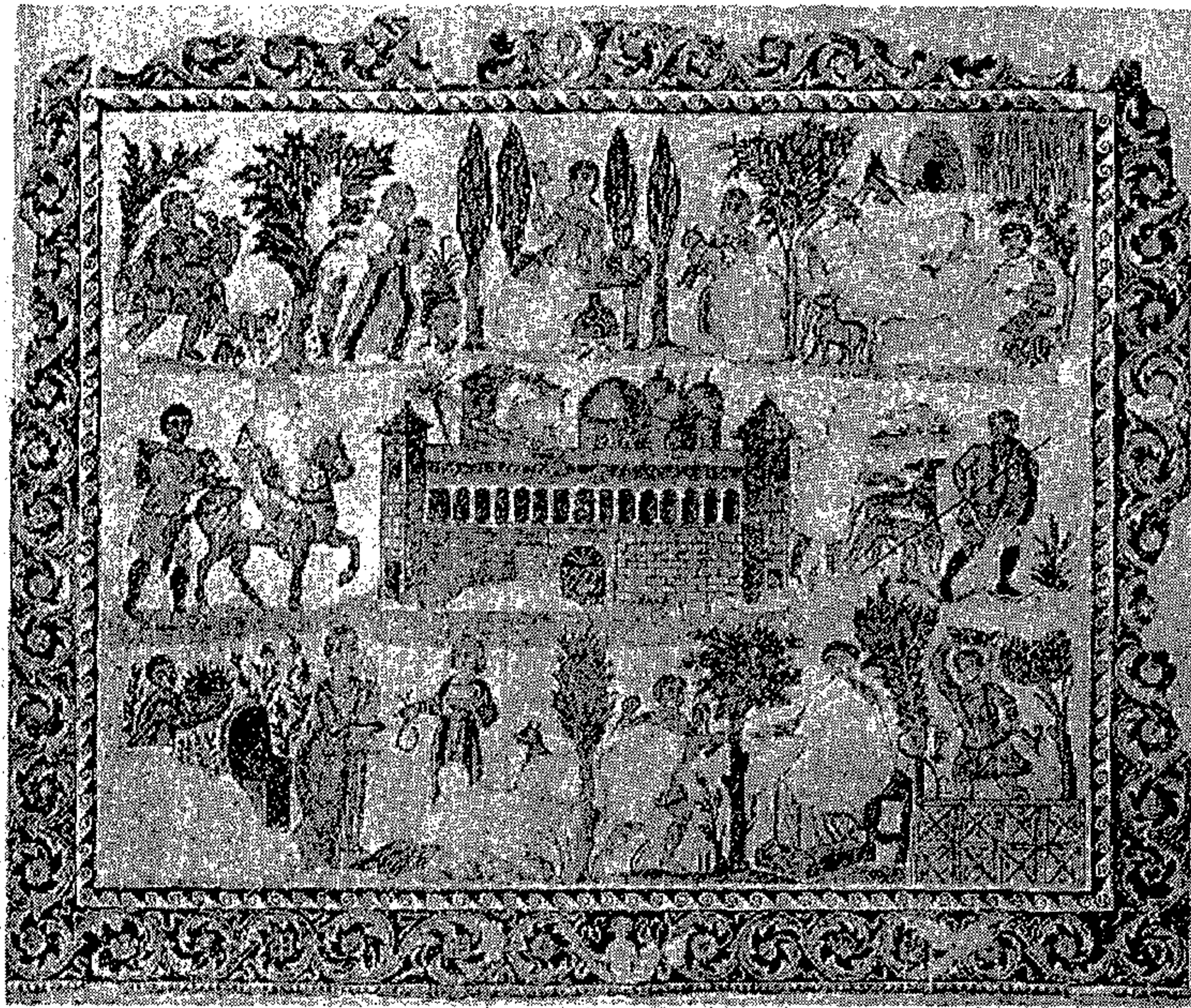


FIGURE 11.3 THE JULIUS MOSAIC FROM CARTHAGE

and wanted to keep their workforce happy.

The Julius Mosaic (Figure 11.3) also gives us a glimpse of the life of *coloni* on an estate in the 4<sup>th</sup> century AD. For the moment it is chiefly the bottom panel, depicting presumably the wealthy owners of the estate, which concerns us.<sup>59</sup> In this panel the furniture items imply that the noble couple is inside the house. The man sits enthroned, while a man to the left, holding two cranes, presents him with a scroll on which the words '*D[omi]no Iu[l]io*' have been written (not legible here). Opposite the *dominus* on the left hand side of the panel, a woman leans on a column in an attitude reminiscent of Classical Greek sculpture, clearly the consort of the *dominus*, since she also has a chair or throne behind her. Veyne (1981: 245-252) maintains that the picture is an allegory for the tribute brought by dependents to the patron, and that this is more than mere homage, it shows economic dependence. They are *coloni*, bringing their master the first fruits. It is noteworthy that the woman, presumably the mistress of the house, is given a prominent role, in fact an equal one with that of her husband. Her presence would suggest that she also plays a role as landlord or at the very least has some sort of role of authority in the management of the estate. Dixon (1988: 187) suggests that references to women in this role suggest that 'petitioners approached wives and mothers as readily as their office-holding male connections, on the assumption that women were in a position to secure concessions and favours.'<sup>60</sup> The offerings to her are flowers

<sup>59</sup> The mosaic was found in the city and not at the estate itself. Presumably the owner wanted to advertise his wealth by his estate but did not actually reside there himself. The middle panel shows a hunting scene on either side of an enormous villa, all intended to display the power of the *dominus*, who rides a horse where his underlings go on foot. Women in Roman society did not hunt, so this panel excludes them.

<sup>60</sup> Compare for example other references to such women in the provinces: Tac., *Ann.* 3.33; 4.19; 6.29; Pliny, *Ep.* 3.9.19; Dio 58.24.3; 59.18.4 and Juv. 8.128.



and jewellery - one wonders if *coloni* would have been able to afford such gifts?

On property in terms of housing we are even less well informed. As in the case of other Roman remains, archaeological excavations are not always able to give a name to the owner of a particular dwelling. Similarly from Late Antiquity there are a number of mosaics which attest to large and well fortified villas (as in Figure 11.3 above), but seldom to who owned them. Conversely we have information about women owning houses, but not about their size or value.<sup>61</sup> Our sources nevertheless reveal some interesting attitudes to property.

Generally cities founded as colonies were inclined to have larger houses situated beyond the city walls in outlying districts, as for example at Thamugadi, founded as a colony by Trajan in AD 100 (Thébert 1987: 341). By contrast Hippo was a town of Punic origin where the houses of the rich made up a part of the town. In one of Augustine's letters to a woman named Italica in Rome, we learn that she had either donated a house in Hippo to the Church or allowed them to use it:

*De domo illa quid dicam, nisi benignissimae tuae curae gratias agam? Nam eam quam dare possumus, nolunt, quam volunt autem dare non possumus. Neque enim, sicut falso audierunt, a decessore meo relicta est ecclesiae, sed inter antiqua eius praedia possidetur et antiquae alteri ecclesiae sic cohaeret quem ad modum ista qua de agitur, alteri.*

What shall I say about that house except to thank you for your very generous thought? For the house I can give they do not wish, and the one they wish I cannot give, since it was not left to the Church by my predecessor, as they were wrongly informed, but is held among its ancient properties and adjoins the one ancient Church just as the one now under consideration adjoins the other.<sup>62</sup> [Aug., Ep. 99.3]

Clearly the house was expendable and not her only property, since she could freely dispense with its use. Its position was not, however, as advantageous as that of Pudentilla's seaside villa, which obviously made it less valuable to its owner. Pudentilla some centuries before this was also the owner of multiple properties, owning houses or villas of which we know two were in Oea itself. It was at the *villa suburbana* that Apuleius was first invited to stay when he came from the Apii.<sup>63</sup> This was clearly not a poor man's hovel. Apuleius emphasizes its advantages:

*Multis etiam precibus meis Appiis aufert, ut ad sese in domum matris suae transferar; salubriorem mihi habitationem futuram; praeterea prospectum maris, qui mihi gratissimus est, liberius me ex ea fruiturum.*

His [Pontianus'] urgent entreaty induced my friends the Apii to allow me to leave them and to become a guest in his mother's house. I should find the situation healthier, he said, and should get a freer view of the sea - a special attraction in my eyes. [Apol. 72.6]

Pudentilla's second house, 'large and richly decorated' (*grandem domum opulente ornatam*), she had made over to her son [Apol. 93.4; 100.4]. Apuleius also mentions that Pudentilla had invited her sons and daughter-in-law to one of her properties but does not specify which one, although clearly it must have been a villa of some size to accommodate them [Apol. 88.1]. The number of house slaves in Pudentilla's villa at Oea was moderate. Apuleius, requested by his accusers to bring the house slaves as witnesses, brought only fourteen slaves with him [Apol. 44.3]. He may of course have limited their number to contain the evidence against him.

In a different economic category altogether is the evidence on property ownership provided by two stone plaques

<sup>61</sup> On African homes and their value: 'Ruling-class homes were not turned out mechanically and did not suffer from repetitiousness, lack of planning, or inability to adapt construction to its context. Houses were planned, some more elaborately, some less, and their owners played a key role in the design, which reflected their needs and their financial resources' (Thébert 1987: 351).

<sup>62</sup> Exactly which churches are meant here is uncertain. Five churches in Hippo are mentioned by Augustine in addition to the Donatist church.

<sup>63</sup> On a possible specific location for this villa, see ALCOCK (1950): 'A seaside villa in Tripolitania'.



dated to AD 218-222, recording an irrigation scheme for a large number of agricultural plots near Lamasba ('Aïn Merwâna) in what was clearly intended to be some sort of resolution to conflict [*CIL* 18587 *passim* = 4440 *passim*].<sup>64</sup> Proprietors and their plots of land are listed in columns, giving their names, the size of the plot, the time of day when the plot received its water share from the *Aqua Claudiana*<sup>65</sup> as well as for how long. Shaw (1982a: 67) points out that the majority of the individuals mentioned were of African descent, even though all the names, for example Arrania Spesina [*CIL* 18604 = 4442], are Latinized. Family members tended to hold adjacent plots, as in the case of the Apuleii, the Dentilii or the Germanii, and there are indications that the eldest son received twice the allotment of the other heirs (Shaw 1982a: 88-89).<sup>66</sup> This system refers back to an older Hamitic-Semitic tradition of inheritance and is here exemplified in the cases of Apuleus Processus and Iulius Fortunatus of plots 19 and 47 respectively, who both inherited a double share when compared to that of the other heirs. Unlike the Hamitic-Semitic system,<sup>67</sup> however, women are also shown to have inherited property (for example Maria Satura and Maria Donatula, heirs of Marius Saturninus)<sup>68</sup> and are attested as the owners of several plots, although they only form 8.5% of the total ownership indicated on the tablets. Moreover, all the plots owned by women apart from that of Licinia Domitia which was large, are at best average in size.<sup>69</sup> Clearly the Hamitic-Semitic system had been ameliorated by Roman influences, but yet not obliterated.

Marriages between families where consolidation of property may have been a factor is suggested in a number of cases. The Germanii for example held two plots adjacent to two properties belonging to the Dentilii, and the Germanius Dentilianus of plot 40 is probably the son of one Germanius who married a daughter of the Dentilii; similar cases can be found among the Manilii and the Iulii (Shaw 1982a: 89). Only in one case is joint ownership of the property explicitly mentioned, where the owners (plot 68) are Aelius Victor of the Aelii and Valeria Fortunata of the Valerii.

At the same time, however, marriage of female heirs with 'outsiders', for example veterans, is far stronger here than in other communities such as the *fundus Tuletianos* of the *Tablettes Albertini*, the more isolated Tripolitanian settlement discussed below. Lamasba with its less restricted physical environment and better resources was clearly more open to external (Roman) influences (Shaw 1982a: 91-92). Here frontier expansion and foreign influences were part of social and economic life, which made for a more flexible property system.

The *Tablettes Albertini* for the most part concern peasants of the same or a similar economic class. The majority of the individuals mentioned in the tablets were *coloni* and not the owners of the land. The exceptions are the owner of the estate, Flavius Geminus Catullinus, and his *conductores* (and most likely his kinsmen), Geminus

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<sup>64</sup> The legal ramifications are discussed by SHAW (1982a): 'Lamasba: an ancient irrigation community', 68-71.

<sup>65</sup> The *Aqua Claudiana* was probably a major spring in the vicinity of which the irrigation system was set up (Shaw 1982a: 72-73).

<sup>66</sup> The plot sizes vary: 0.4/0.5 hectares (small holding), 1.5/2.2 hectares (medium holding), 2.5-3.6 hectares (large holding), 10/14.2 hectares (largest holding) (Shaw 1982a: 87).

<sup>67</sup> 'For example, in the contemporary Jabal Amûr region in western Algeria, in conditions analogous to those at Lamasba, daughters do not ordinarily inherit because of the fear that land in the hands of women could pass into the hands of strangers by way of marriage outside the community' (Shaw 1982a: 91). This would seem to prove an outside or non-indigenous influence in the case of Lamasba. See above p. 220.

<sup>68</sup> The Marian name indicates descendants of the Gaetulians who were recruited for the *Legio III Augusta* (Shaw 1982a: 89).

<sup>69</sup> Women owning plots measured in hectares: Licinia Domitia = ca. 2.25/3.24; Germania Castula = ca. 2.14/2.68; Sextilia Macrina = ca. 1.5/2.2; [---]vena = ca. 1.12/1.4; Octavia Donata = ca. 1.08/1.35; Steminia Aemerita = ca. 1.1/1.3; Iulia Victoria = ca. 0.65/0.82; Lollia Mustia = ca. 0.4/0.52; [Mar]ia Dona[t]ula = ca. 0.27/0.3; Maria Satura = ca. 0.13/0.17; Val(eria) Fortunata = ?



Felix, Geminus Cresconius and Geminus Ianuarius, who were probably responsible for collecting rent from the *coloni* (Mattingly 1989: 404). Here on the *fundus Tuletianos* wealth was based on the produce of the land in terms of olives, figs and some other minor crops, dependent on a floodwater farming method with most of the cultivated land situated in the wadi beds (Mattingly 1989: 408).

All but four of the thirty-four tablets pertain to the sale of land titles of some sort. It is possible that traditional African customs relating to land-use were incorporated into the law, since the key feature was that land-ownership was separate from ownership of that which was developed on the land, such as irrigation schemes, fruit trees or olive presses.<sup>70</sup> This type of arrangement encouraged capital investment from both the owner of the land and the tenant (Barker *et al* 1996: 323). The thirty tablets relating to land transactions all involve the sale of these 'surface' items, and it seems that, for whatever reason, the Geminii brothers were buying this up from the tenants (Mattingly 1989: 405). It may be that climatic conditions were worsening, since Mattingly (1989: 409) notes that twenty or thirty kilometres to the south, wadi cultivation gives way to 'oases and irrigated gardens'.

In some of these cases the women involved in the transactions are widowed heads of households [*T.Alb.* 11; 15; 22 and 24], while in others they are almost invariably recorded together with their husbands in the transactions. Processanus and Siddina, his wife, are the sellers in four of the tablets [*T.Alb.* 13; 17; 31; 33], while it appears that finally, after the death of Processanus, his widow and their sons were obliged to sell on an even larger scale [*T.Alb.* 15]. It is possible that they may at one time have



FIGURE 11.4 MOSAIC FROM LEPCIS MAGNA.  
WOMAN PAYING TAXES?

been fairly prosperous and owned a large number of olive trees, since Tablet 31 records the sale of their own olive press. It is also likely that they may have seen the press as some sort of investment, since, as Mattingly (1989: 412) suggests, development of the fields may also not have been done on an individual basis only. Whatever the case may be, the sale of the trees and the press suggest that the tenants may have been struggling, and one may imagine that this would especially be the case with widows and/or minors as the only workforce on the land.<sup>71</sup> Siddina herself would have been responsible for paying the rent to the *conductor*. The above illustration (Figure 11.4) appears to be a woman offering a chicken and another unidentifiable item to a man whose horse is waiting in the background held by an attendant. Could this possibly be a landlord or his

<sup>70</sup> This is also implied in the Lamasba instance discussed above (Shaw 1982a: 81).

<sup>71</sup> Under the *lex Manciana* all rights to land were forfeited after two years if the land was not properly farmed (Mattingly 1989: 414).





FIGURE 11.5 DETAIL FROM THE TOP REGISTER OF THE JULIUS MOSAIC

of instances women were the heads of households, and this symbolic illustration, part of a larger collage of agricultural activities on estates, serves to emphasize this as a fairly regular occurrence, as does the accompanying illustration (Figure 11.5), a detail from the top panel of the Julius mosaic illustrated in its entirety in Figure 11.3.<sup>72</sup> The central figure (here on the right of the illustration) is taken by Veyne (1981: 245) to be the patron spirit of the house, which seems a reasonable inference. It is generally assumed that the figures approaching her are the seasons bringing gifts (Veyne 1981: 246), although some of the gifts themselves seem to be rather 'unseasonal', for example a duck and a goat, rather than wheat or figs, and only three 'seasons' are represented. Veyne (1981: 245-252) has suggested that the bottom panel is symbolic of *coloni* paying tribute, and if so it is possible that this scene too represents such peasant contributions, the variation in gifts illustrating the mixed economy of large estates. If these are *coloni* paying their tribute, one of them is again a woman, in this case carrying a basket of olives.

In other cases the women of the *Tablettes Albertini* may have belonged to more affluent families. One of the tablets [*T.Alb.* 4] records a sale of the rights to two adjoining terrace plots by Iulius Restitutus and Donata, his wife,<sup>73</sup> while in a number of different transactions [*T.Alb.* 7; 10; 12; 14; 20; 22] two men, the Iulii Messii (possibly brothers) and their wives Fotta and Gilesa, sold over 70 olive trees. We have no information about how many olives remained on the holding, if any, but Charles-Picard (1959: 62-63) notes that peasants farming with olives in modern Tunisia own between 20 and 100 trees, so these *coloni* were either wealthier than the average tenant to be able to remain in business, or otherwise 70 trees represented a substantial percentage of their holdings and they were selling out on a large scale. The former seems indicated by the fact that they, like Iulius Restitutus and Donata and others, and like many in the instance of Lamasba, owned or controlled adjacent plots (Mattingly 1989: 412).

## (ii) women and other capital investments

There is some evidence for women who were involved in other capital ventures, although the exact nature of

<sup>72</sup> See also the discussion of VEYNE (1981), 'Les cadeaux des colons à leur propriétaire', 245-252, regarding the other two panels of this mosaic.

<sup>73</sup> Other families also controlled more than one plot of land, for example Iulius Leporius and his wife and his brothers [*T.Alb.* 3].



what was involved is not always clear. Women involved in various business enterprises, from tavern keeping to caravan transport, have already been mentioned.<sup>74</sup> Such undertakings by women are also evidenced in Roman Egypt, where there is a lot more available data from preserved financial accounts (Hobson 1983). In local commercial transport, assets consisted of camels, slaves, cash or houses (Hobson 1983: 314). Among the Garamantes Tin Hinan was, to judge from her tomb remains, a person of wealth and status in the second half of the 4<sup>th</sup> century AD.<sup>75</sup> Salama (1981:522) suggests that her wealth may be explained by her privileged position both in the social hierarchy and in the trans-Saharan trade: 'In such a context the funerary equipment of Tin Hinan is symptomatic; it can be seen as a set of exotic objects collected for a local chief who doubtless levied a toll on people crossing her territory. The Tuaregs of later times certainly had this pattern of behaviour' (Salama 1981: 526). The Garamantes continued their trade until the Arab conquest (Christides 2000: 5), a period over which some wealth could have been accumulated by these tribes.

Other women outside traditional urbanized society may have acquired their wealth in the same way, for example the sister of Firmus, Cyria, who in the 4<sup>th</sup> century 'abounding in wealth and in feminine persistence, had resolved to make great efforts to aid her brother' (*sorore Firmi nomine Cyria, quae abundans divitiis, et destinatione feminea, nisibus magnis instituit iuvare germanum*) [Amm. Mar. 29.5.28].<sup>76</sup> The level of Romanization in the case of this Mauretanian prince and his sister is difficult to gauge. Their father, Nubel, had been a minor Mauretanian chieftain [Amm. Mar. 29.5.2] probably in the style described above,<sup>77</sup> specifically of the Musulamii, a tribe described as 'lower on the tribal ladder' than the Gaetuli in the sense of power and influence (Mattingly 1994: 19). The Musulamii were both sedentary and semi-nomadic, so it is equally likely that Cyria's wealth was in landed property. Again here it would appear that it was possible for a woman in a native context to own property, as in the case of Tin Hinan. Since Tin Hinan was buried with Roman style jewellery, we know that there was some contact with Romanized life, and this is also likely in the case of Cyria, and it is possible that there was Roman influence which benefited these women in gaining their wealth. The anomaly of well-to-do indigenous women might be explained by contact with Roman practice, as was the case at Lamasba.

In all these instances women were clearly in control of or had access to some wealth which separated them by varying degrees from the indigent masses, and in many cases they can also be shown to have been authoritative and influential. In some of the examples cited above, women were clearly not affluent enough to indulge in *liberalitas*. Nevertheless they can be seen to have shown initiative or were placed in positions of influence in some small way. But it is the women with access to substantial resources who joined society as benefactors and patrons with which we shall be concerned in the following chapter.

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<sup>74</sup> See pp. 207; 209.

<sup>75</sup> The dating is based on a Roman coin of the emperor Constantine from c. AD 313-324 found among the funerary artefacts as well as on the radio-carbon dating of the wooden bed on which the body was found, which dated to 470 AD, give or take 130 years either way (Salama 1981: 521). COURTOIS (1954): *Les Vandales et l'Afrique*, 95, is probably correct in his assessment that Roman jewellery and coinage found in her tomb need not suggest anything less than the most superficial contact with Romanization.

<sup>76</sup> Mentioned above p. 218.

<sup>77</sup> See pp. 30-31.





## CHAPTER 12

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# **“FANTASIES OF NOBILITY AND HERALDIC ART”**

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This chapter will explore the role of women in public life as leaders, priestesses, deaconesses and/or benefactors in their communities. As such the discussion will be largely centred on women of wealth and status, but attention will also be paid to the full spectrum of roles played by women in the various cults of the African provinces, including some who functioned at the humbler levels, and to their numerical influence within such groups. A far greater amount of evidence, as can be expected, has been found for prominent priestesses and wealthy benefactresses. As discussed in the preceding two chapters, partible inheritance, marriage and longevity gave women a proportion of landed resources. There is a good deal of evidence that women did not merely remain the passive possessors of wealth. As *patronae*, women could be generous towards individuals or towards tenants who worked on their estates. They could also be benefactors to the community of the city at large, for which they were sometimes rewarded with priesthoods, in turn leading to further munificence or euergetism. A large number of inscriptions record the various types of benefactions made by women to municipalities, or honour those women who had donated towards the city a portion of their largesse. It is women's role as public patrons which is the reason for the title of this chapter. In his *History of Private Life* Veyne (1987: 113) refers to the desire of municipal aristocracies to imitate the senatorial élite in terms of euergetism and their 'penchant for useless building and for erecting honorific statues to the glory of family dynasties', in short, the 'fantasies of nobility and heraldic art'.<sup>1</sup>

Being in control of their own means did not guarantee a socially acceptable result, however, as can be seen by some of the unruly female behaviour already discussed in Chapter 10. Sometimes women used their access to wealth to disrupt the male order, something which can be seen most clearly in the evidence from the Christian era in Roman Africa. The Christian context, particularly heretical sects, also allowed for female behaviour that deviated from the norm of Graeco-Roman Christianity. This short section in this chapter will examine the role of Roman African Christian women within the parameters set by the Christian Church as discussed in Chapter 10.

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<sup>1</sup> This is essentially the converse of inheriting or earning money as discussed in Chapters 9 to 11. The actual material benefits from the exercise of euergetism were limited even for men, and much more so for women, who could not occupy public office in the Western provinces of the Roman Empire. The reasons why women chose to exercise their capacity as benefactors will be explored more fully in Chapter 13.



## THE CONTEXT: PAGAN AND CHRISTIAN CIVIC LIFE

In dealing with the municipal organization in the Roman African provinces, we are essentially talking about a Romanized context, even though in some cases pre-Roman titles such as the *suffetes* remained long after the demise of Punic authority. Some facets of this phenomenon have already been discussed in Chapter 2 - the various aspects of Romanization, and how Romanization was part of municipal and provincial status.<sup>2</sup> Aspiring to a seat on the municipal council or a magistracy involved the individual in the process of patronage and *liberalitas*. Municipal councils in the African cities usually consisted of 100 councillors<sup>3</sup> and these bodies tended to confine local politics to a narrow élite, determined firstly by wealth and secondly by the process of co-option, which meant that the council members had the veto on letting in outsiders.<sup>4</sup> Anyone who entered municipal office - magistrates, town councillors and holders of civic priesthoods - was expected to pay a certain sum, the *summa honoraria*, which was fixed by municipal statute into the local treasury in virtue of their office.<sup>5</sup> The lowest recorded figure for an African magistracy is HS 800 (Themetra, AD 146), while at the other extreme HS 38 000 was paid for a *quinquennialitas* at Carthage roughly during the same period (Duncan-Jones 1974: 83). Clearly there were enormous differences in the amount of the *summa honoraria* from one town to the next, depending on local wealth. Since these payments were required by the office, they were not true benefactions, and additional gifts (games, banquets, temples) were made to display the individual's generosity. These were called *pollicitationes*, since the benefactor 'promised' them to the city *ob honorem*, 'on account of the honour', of his or her office. Such promises were legally binding on that individual and his or her heirs.<sup>6</sup> Lastly there was also *adiectio*, the sum spent by an individual over and above the amount originally specified in his promise (called variously *ampliatio pecunia* or *multiplicata pecunia*) (Garnsey 1971: 116-129). For magistrates and decurions there were many types of civic involvement - public obligations, such as municipal games (*munera*), serving as ambassador, supervising grain/water supply, maintaining public buildings and roads (Rives 1995: 30 *passim*).<sup>7</sup> The responsibilities of religious office were also varied, for example supplying oil (free of charge) for athletes in the games, offering sacrifices, sponsoring banquets for the general public or funding public rituals in a magisterial capacity.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> See above pp. 31-37.

<sup>3</sup> There are exceptions, as noted by DUNCAN-JONES (1962): 'Cost outlays and summae honorariae from Roman Africa', 70-72; JARRETT (1971): 'Decurions and priests', 514-515, but 100 appears to have been the norm.

<sup>4</sup> The process of an individual's election by the whole *ordo* of a town is clear by Fronto's letter to Arrius Antoninus, then (ca. AD 164) *iuridicus per Italiam regionis Transpadanae*. [Ep. ad Amic. 2.7.7]. See also the comments by WESCH-KLEIN (1990): *Liberalitas in rempublicam*, 35, on the interpretation of this letter concerning the privileges of decurions such as banquets and special seats in the theatre. Such social codes were common across the Empire.

<sup>5</sup> Most of our evidence for payment of *summa honoraria* comes from the 2<sup>nd</sup> and early 3<sup>rd</sup> centuries (Duncan-Jones 1974: 82). See also the lists of civic priesthoods for the Western Empire in LADAGE (1971): *Städtische Priester- und Kultämter im Lateinischen Westen des Imperium Romanum zur Kaiserzeit*.

<sup>6</sup> Outside the North African provinces there are few examples of *pollicitatio* or promises made in honour of office.

<sup>7</sup> Smaller projects were frequently paid for with public money. The variety of sources from which this money was collected are summarised by RIVES (1995): *Religion and authority in Roman Carthage*, 34-36: for example, rent paid for public property, fines, entry fees at baths and temples [Tert., *Apolog.* 13.6]; local taxes; *summa legitima* and *honoraria*.

<sup>8</sup> The expenses of various cults included for example animals for public sacrifices, the upkeep of temples (cleaning, repair and



Because women in the western half of the Roman Empire did not occupy magistracies or serve as councillors, it is mainly priesthoods which will concern us here. Since Republican times it had been customary for a priest upon his election to provide some expensive public entertainment and a banquet for his new colleagues. This and other forms of munificence were used to create 'an enduring relation of dependence, gratitude and respect towards themselves, in short, to create symbolic capital' (Gordon 1990a: 223). Benefactions were not intended to relieve the plight of the poor - if the poor benefitted it was an inadvertent consequence where the real purpose of the benefaction was political advancement among one's peers, and it was chiefly they who profited (which explains why it was the councillors who most often got the payments whereas the citizenry only got a free dinner). Gifts also often illustrate the hierarchy of the city, since those of superior status are given precedence in inscriptions. The benefactor in turn could be thanked by the erection of an honorary statue in a public place, either paid for from the public treasury (*pecunia publica*), or by another individual or group, for which the *ordo* had to give permission (*decreto decurionum*), and for which they sometimes decreed a particular site (*locus datus decreto decurionum*). Occasionally individuals so honoured even paid for their own statues in gratitude for that honour.

Priesthoods in official or public cults (which could vary from one city to the next) were an integral part of municipal politics and a means to social prestige and advancement, while the status of unofficial cults depended on a number of factors and was not usually linked to municipal ambitions. As far as the Roman cults were concerned, Romanization was not a matter of simply transposing Roman ritual to conquered soil. The traditional Roman festivals were the prerogative of Rome. The provinces underwent the *interpretatio Romana*, a process whereby native gods were assimilated with Graeco-Roman 'equivalents', sometimes indicated by a double name such as 'Juno Caelestis'. The first official cults were established by colonial charter, although additions could be made in time. The first colonists had been accompanied by Roman official who had drawn up the individual colonial charter and appointed the first magistrates (*duoviri*, aediles and quaestors)<sup>9</sup> and priests for these cults (Rives 1995: 28). Priests of public cults had the same privileges as magistrates (for example special seating in theatres and exemption from public obligations such as the supervision of the grain supply) and came from the same élite group (Rives 1995: 31). Ultimate authority in religion was held by the *ordo decurionum*, whose members held their positions for life. They were the chief decision-makers of the city, assuming the broader responsibility for the *sacra publica*, for example deciding on the official cults of the city, on the number of feast days and when they were to be held (Rives 1995: 33). A clear distinction was made between the Rome-sanctioned 'official cults' (amalgamations of the Roman and local cults of status) and peripheral native cults, which had no social prestige in the urban context. A number of Latin priestly titles were superimposed on native priestly roles, for example as at Lepcis Magna, where the Punic title *addir* 'azerim or *addir kohanim* became

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refurbishment), and the celebration of games. Some of these expenses could be paid for from the public treasury. Regular cult expenses (such as sacrificial animals) were farmed out by the *duoviri* (authorized by the *ordo*) to businessmen who competed for these contracts. Major expenses were paid for through *munera* or through voluntary benefactions (Rives 1995: 34-36).

<sup>9</sup> Magistrates also had religious responsibilities. We have some idea of their duties from Tertullian [*De Idol.* 17.3], who notes that Christians are prohibited from being magistrates because these offices entailed sacrificing, or leading a victim to sacrifice, letting contracts to provide animals for sacrifice, assigning people to maintain the pagan temples and presenting spectacles with either their own or public money, or both.



the *praefectus sacrorum*.<sup>10</sup> The priesthoods of some of the Oriental religions (notably those of Cybele and Isis) also occasionally entered the roll of civic priesthoods (Roman African inscriptions for example record that some of the dedications to these deities were made on land granted by decurial decree, as will be indicated below).<sup>11</sup>

According to Roman tradition, priests and priestesses belonged to colleges under the authority of someone of high status, the latter indicated in inscriptions by their names and titles. This was a characteristic of a number of public cults in Roman African cities.<sup>12</sup> Oriental tradition, which was strongly hierarchical, was also evident in the organization of certain cults in Roman Africa. Inscriptions indicate that below the high priest or priestess fell a number of functionaries in the temples, and at the bottom of the scale the initiates (the latter were a particular feature of mystery cults such as that of Liber Pater, Isis, Cybele and the Cereres<sup>13</sup>).

The status of a particular cult usually determined the amount of *liberalitas* of its priests and priestesses. Official cults are logically better represented, since they were given official sanction and prominence. Since financial contributions were expected of priests and priestesses entering public cults, it follows that only those individuals of considerable means were chosen by the *ordo*.

Under the general heading of context given above the following aspects (patronage and benefactions) will be briefly examined, as well as their later development in Late Antiquity and under the influence of Christianity.

### Patronage

The concept of patronage involved *liberalitas*, but encompassed a much broader spectrum, since patronage was not limited to a relationship between a benefactor and a city or town. Nicols (1989: 118-119) distinguishes three types of patronage: (1) of one individual of high status over another of lower status; (2) of an advocate over someone he is representing; (3) of a liberator over his/her *liberti*; (4) of a Roman citizen over a group of people such as a province, municipality or *collegium*. Saller (1982: 1) further qualifies patronage as a reciprocal relationship between parties of unequal status and one that is personal as opposed to commercial.<sup>14</sup>

Patronage of communities by non-African Romans of individual wealth and status usually arose from a relationship built up through an official position which that individual held in connection with a specific community - proconsuls, *legati*, *legati Augusti pro praetore exercitus Africae* (governors of Numidia), as well as *curatores rei publicae*. Whole families and their descendants could be adopted as patrons, the latter indicated in inscriptions by terms such as 'in perpetuity'.<sup>15</sup> Other patrons of communities were those of African origin who achieved high rank in the imperial service, or members of local municipal aristocracies (Warmington 1954: 49). Patronage need not necessarily be expressed in material goods such as the financing of public buildings,

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<sup>10</sup> Other examples, including the conflation of the flamine with the board of eleven chiefs, can be found in SHAW (1973): 'The *undecemprimi* in Roman Africa'.

<sup>11</sup> See also the examples given in the Table in Appendix A.

<sup>12</sup> For example, *sacerdotes loci primi*, *sacerdos maximus*, *pater sacrorum*.

<sup>13</sup> The goddesses Ceres and Persephone are in Africa commonly referred to as the Cereres.

<sup>14</sup> SALLER (1982): *Personal patronage under the early Roman Empire* gives a useful overview of patronage in Africa: Chapter 5 'Patronage and provincials: the case of North Africa', 145-209.

<sup>15</sup> WARMINGTON (1954): 'The municipal patrons of Roman North Africa', 48, notes that such terms were only used when the patrons were not natives of the province.



but could also include intervention on the community's behalf with the provincial governor, with neighbouring communities, with wealthy landowners and even with the emperor himself. Its best known form, however, was its expression in material gifts, *liberalitas*.<sup>16</sup>

### **The nature of the benefactions**

Benefactions, also termed *liberalitas*, essentially consisted of financial contributions by the individual towards the town or city, for example towards the erection of buildings, towards public entertainment, or as donations to various favoured groups. The physical remains of the Roman North African cities indicate the measure of enthusiasm for Roman imports among the affluent in city centres, and they were almost invariably erected either by members of families involved in municipal politics, or those connected to higher political echelons who extended their patronage to African communities in the manner described above.<sup>17</sup> All the Romanized cities of Africa had a forum, the centre of commercial, political and religious activity for the area, styled on the imperial fora in Rome: a rectangular shape surrounded by porticoes on three sides (covering the façades of temples, a curia, perhaps a basilica and various other official buildings) and a major temple on the fourth. The purpose of these public buildings was to showcase power, firstly that of Rome over the native African and Punic inhabitants, and secondly that of the élite families which had financed their erection as an expression of nobility and grandeur, what Veyne (1987: 110) terms a combination of 'civic spirit and ostentation - the twin roots of euergetism'. Not all public building took place in the forum, however. Donations could also include hippodromes, theatres and baths elsewhere in and outside the city.<sup>18</sup> Costs for such monuments in Africa and elsewhere have been collected by Duncan-Jones, and estimated costs for other buildings can be calculated from the figures given in these inscriptions.<sup>19</sup>

Another area of sponsorship was that of spectacles and games (*munera* and *ludi*), which often celebrated an appointment as magistrate or a dedication of a monument:

*... licet transierit hoc genus editionis ab honoribus mortuorum ad honores viventium, quaesturas dico et magistratus et flaminia et sacerdotia.*

... though this class of public entertainment has passed from being a compliment to the dead<sup>20</sup> to being a compliment to the living on entering office (I mean quaestorships, magistracies, flaminates and priesthoods).

[Tert., *De Spect.* 12]

Magistrates were required to pay a certain minimum contribution towards public cult festivals,<sup>21</sup> and it was expected that they would spend much more than the minimum in their efforts to outdo each other. Such public exhibitions could, as Hopkins (1983a: 8) puts it, 'make or break social and political reputations', as indicated

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<sup>16</sup> Some of the senatorial women connected with the African provinces have already been mentioned, pp. 241-242.

<sup>17</sup> Most large buildings were erected by private individuals exercising euergetism rather than with public money (Rives 1995: 100-152).

<sup>18</sup> For example a theatre at Calama [*ILAlg* I, 2121]; *thermae* at Thagura [*CIL* 28065];

<sup>19</sup> DUNCAN-JONES (1974): *The economy of the Roman Empire - Quantitative studies*, gives a fairly comprehensive list of costs.

<sup>20</sup> Throughout the centuries in which barbarian hordes invaded the cities of the Empire - Trier, Carthage, Rome - there was a continued faith in the mysterious power effected through the performance of the games which had secured the survival of these and other Roman cities (Brown 1987: 274). One African author writing during the reign of Diocletian comments sarcastically on the fact that people hear rumbling and feel the earth quaking when the games have carelessly performed and their specific forms and character have not received the proper attentions [Arnob., *Adv. Nat.* 7.38].

<sup>21</sup> For example, Arnobius of Sicca attacks the pagans for observing the birthdays of the gods with games and immortalizing men with statues [*Adv. Nat.* 1.64].



in Apuleius' novel:

*Nam vir et genere primarius et opibus plurimus et liberalitate praecipuus digno fortunae suae splendore publicas voluptates instruebat.*

A man of high birth, great wealth and liberality, he was preparing a public entertainment of a brilliance to match his fortune. [Metam. 4.13]

This also implies that there were certain expectations of the wealthy regarding public munificence. The inhabitants of the African provinces proved to be very appreciative (and demanding) of the entertainment offered in the amphitheatres and at racetracks. Evidence for the Africans' addiction to public entertainment is given for example by Salvian [*De Gub. Dei* 6.68], who maintains that only the arrival of the Vandals interrupted a slavish devotion to circuses and other heathen pleasures, and the number of venues for this type of entertainment bears out that these were enormously popular.<sup>22</sup> Expenditure on this type of entertainment could range from HS 200 000 (Carthage, AD 133) for four days of games featuring gladiators and panthers [*ILA* 390] to HS 200 per annum for *ludi* at Uchi Maius in the middle of the 3<sup>rd</sup> century [*CIL* 26275] (Duncan-Jones 1974: 103-105).

For the same reasons of status and political advantage, the wealthy also sponsored banquets and handouts.<sup>23</sup> The *epulum* or banquet usually accompanied a dedication of some sort. Specific invitations therefore often included religious groups, such as the priests of Ceres [Mustis, *CIL* 16417] or the *collegium* of the *dendrophori* at Thamugadi [*AE* 1954, 154].<sup>24</sup> *Sportulae* or handouts were usually indicated for a particular section of the populace, frequently the decurions, but sometimes also including other small groups such as the Augustales, or (rarely) the citizens of the town, such as at Cuicul [*AE* 1914, 45] (Wesch-Klein 1990: 34).

### The evolution of patronage and benefactions in Late Antiquity

Under the principate there was some opportunity for social mobility, since wealth could lead to a magistracy, but under the late Empire all categories under the *curiales* were reduced to the level of *humiliores* and many essential occupations became hereditary, from which there was no legal escape.<sup>25</sup> While landed wealth was still the basis for municipal élites, the decurions were by now only the middle class whose authority was based in the local municipal council.<sup>26</sup> In Late Antiquity this authority of the *curiales* was increasingly undermined by an oligarchy of great landowners, the municipal *primates* or *principales*. The latter had grown rich by exporting the grain and oil produced on their estates, and their wealth had earned them a place in the imperial nobility.

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<sup>22</sup> DODGE (1999): 'Amusing the masses. Buildings for entertainment and leisure in the Roman world', 230-232, notes that amphitheatres are more evident in the Western provinces of the Roman Empire than in the East, where the local inhabitants probably made use of the theatres predating the Roman era.

<sup>23</sup> Much as in c. 340 BC Hanno had distributed food to gain popularity among the masses. Carthage was one of the few cities of the Roman empire (besides Rome, Alexandria and possibly Antioch) which had a tradition in the distribution of free bread. Only a few instances of individual largesse in this regard are recorded, however (see WESCH-KLEIN (1990): *Liberalitas in Rem Publicam*, 32-33). *Sportulae* had also originally consisted of gifts of food, but later came to mean a financial donation.

<sup>24</sup> As to whether decurions had their meals sponsored by the public treasury in any case, see WESCH-KLEIN (1990): *Liberalitas in Rem Publicam*, 35-36.

<sup>25</sup> Note the new division into *illustres*, *spectabilis* and *clarissimi*, roughly the equivalent of the *magistratus maximi*, *medii* and *minores*.

<sup>26</sup> The governing class at Carthage was simply the rich, without the distinction of origin, and even without distinguishing between landed and commercial wealth. In fact this arrangement was closer to what they had been in pre-Roman times during Punic dominance: then the contemporary Greeks had criticized 'the importance of wealth (as opposed to birth or merit) in the acquisition of power at Carthage' (Law 1978: 122).



The richest *curiales* attempted to rise to the rank of *primates*, seeking protection under the privileged orders of the senatorial or equestrian nobility, but the rest of the decurial class grew steadily poorer as, by virtue of their office, they were forced to keep up the costly municipal *munera*. Even those who eschewed political life were unable to escape the demands of the plebs: 'the plebs of the city.... might intervene peacefully by hailing the designated victim, extolling his spontaneous generosity, and electing him to office by unanimous acclamation' (Veyne 1987: 108). A similar situation occurred when Melania and her husband were in Africa, and from this account it is clear that to refuse the 'honour' of a popular election to office was no simple matter.

The decline of municipal life and the end of municipal autonomy is analysed by Jacques,<sup>27</sup> who maintains that municipal independence never really existed in its most ideal sense, since cities in antiquity were never divorced from what was going on around them. Consequently the decline of municipal independence was influenced, as Jacques (1984: 788-789) points out, by the transition in the ruling ethos of the empire, from principate to dominate. From the time of Diocletian onward, individuals in the provinces identified with their municipalities less and less.<sup>28</sup> Some identified with their Christian communities, in which case benefactions took on the form of providing for the poor rather than private munificence to benefit their peers and enhance a political career.

From the time of the emperor Gratian (367-383), imperial edicts forbade the observance of pagan practices such as sacrifices, and the temples were closed and their revenues confiscated. In the city of Thamugadi between AD 364 and 367 about two thirds of the *curia* had fulfilled religious functions as *flamines*, *pontifices*, augurs or other pagan offices.<sup>29</sup> Therefore, although the Imperial government had become Christian, the communication network developed by the imperial cult officials was continued for practical reasons, which led to an official repudiation of traditional religious connections, but a paradoxical retention of several old cult titles and even ceremonies (Clover 1982a: 12). Victor Vitensis [3.3-14] writes that in 484, the Vandal king Huneric, an Arian Christian, named *sacerdotes* as some of the provincial dignitaries in his realm. Flavius Geminius Catullinus in the *Tablettes Albertini* also still bore the title of *flamen perpetuus*.<sup>30</sup>

During the 4<sup>th</sup> century the old system of private sponsorship of public entertainment was largely replaced by imperial financing, and *liberalitas* was not effected by individuals from their own pockets but was donated by the emperor through those who represented him (Brown 1987: 273). Games were still put on at the amphitheatre (Brown 1967: 199), although their popularity was overtaken by the races of the circus. During the Vandal period this imperial patronage was interrupted, but according to the writers of the time such as Luxorius, public entertainment did not cease. Who sponsored such events is a matter of uncertainty - clearly it could not have been the imperial government in Rome. Logically one would have to assume that such sponsorship was

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<sup>27</sup> JACQUES (1984): *Le privilège de liberté. Politique impériale et autonomie municipale dans les cités de l'Occident romain (161-244)*.

<sup>28</sup> On the changes in municipal life in Late Antiquity, see LEPELLEY (1992): 'The survival and fall of the Classical city in late Roman Africa'.

<sup>29</sup> The study by CHASTAGNOL (1978): 'L'Album municipal de Timgad' records 36 *flamines perpetui*. According to KOTULA (1979): *Épigraphie et histoire. Les flamines perpétuels*, 131-136, this office in Late Antiquity had a secularized function, that of supervising public building maintenance. LEPELLEY (1979-1981, I): *Les cités de l'Afrique romaine au Bas-Empire, 362-369*, argues for ruler worship of the Germanic kings, followed by CLOVER (1982b): 'Emperor worship in Vandal Africa'.

<sup>30</sup> Other instances of continued titles and possibly functions are mentioned by CLOVER (1982a): 'Carthage and the Vandals', 12 n.90, as well as examples of *flamines* and *sacerdotes* during the Christian era in CLOVER (1989: 61): 'The symbiosis of Romans and Vandals in Africa'.



undertaken by the Vandal and Roman élite. Luxorius [*Epigr.* 18; 26; 27; 34; 46; 60; 81] gives several examples of lavish spending, for example the adornment of circus stables (a painting of the Goddess Victory or a marble fountain for the horses to drink), and the building of an amphitheatre. The Vandal kings (in particular Huneric, Thrasamund and Hilderic) built baths and a number of other monuments, but what clearly emerges from the evidence is that at this time only men carried out such patronage. No buildings sponsored by the Vandal queens or any other women are known, and no poems praising women for their contributions are collected in the *Anthologia Latina*.<sup>31</sup>

### **The role of the Church and Christian patronage**

The Church came into the possession of large tracts of land through the generosity of its converts, which were administered by local bishops, also drawn from the propertied classes. The number of bishops in the African provinces grew rapidly - virtually every African town had at least one bishop, so that by the end of the 4<sup>th</sup> century there were no less than 700 bishoprics, although about half of them were Donatist. These Church officials in part inherited the civic role as patrons of urban building - 'every bishop wanted to build a worthy monument' (Cameron 1993a: 120). Initially, since Christianity took root on the fringes of society, the first buildings did not form part of the forum. It was when Christianity gained political power that the forum fell into decline as the focal point of town.<sup>32</sup> Most of the Roman African cities tend to show a decline in the use of the forum towards the end of the 4<sup>th</sup> century, something which, as Potter (1995: 63-79) convincingly argues from the archaeological evidence, must be linked to the concurrent rise of alternative focal points for the community in the Christian centres which lay some distance from the forum.<sup>33</sup> In Africa where continued use of the forum can be shown (Caesarea, Sabratha and Carthage), a basilica on the forum had been converted to a Christian Church, and here the traditionally pagan associations of the forum had been overwritten by the Christian presence (Potter 1995: 79).<sup>34</sup>

Of course individuals also continued to make contributions, together with imperial patronage. As the bishops inherited the patronage of urban building, so Christian charity was the successor of civic euergetism. Christian almsgiving was an act which (at least in theory) looked for its reward in the hereafter, in contrast to pagan Roman benefactions which looked for immediate honours from their fellow men. There was also a distinction in who benefited from this munificence. In the pagan Roman tradition it was, in the words of Pliny 'the town, neighbours, relations and friends' (*patriae, propinquis, adfinibus, amicis*) [*Ep.* 9.30.1]. Even though the poor might benefit from grain doles and banquets they were not intended as the primary beneficiaries. As

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<sup>31</sup> A detailed analysis of patronage under the Vandals as shown by the poetry of the period has been done by CHALON *ET AL* (1985): 'Memorable factum. Une célébration de l'évergétisme des rois vandales dans l'Anthologie latine'

<sup>32</sup> HODGES AND WHITEHOUSE (1983): *Mohammed, Charlemagne and the origins of Europe*, 52; CHRISTIE (1989): 'The archaeology of Byzantine Italy', 266; RICH (1992): *The city in Late Antiquity*.

<sup>33</sup> Some public buildings on the forum were maintained, for example the baths at Bulla Regia; at other sites (Thuburbo Maius and Sufetula) the forum was turned over to the production of olive oil, or forts were built over the forum area such as at Thugga, Madauros and Tubernuc (Potter 1995: 66-67).

<sup>34</sup> In cases outside Africa where the forum remained in use, it became the medieval marketplace. WICKHAM (1981): *Early Medieval Italy. Central power and local society, 400-1000*, 83; WARD-PERKINS (1984): *From Classical antiquity to the Middle Ages. Urban public building in northern and central Italy, AD 300-850*, 183 *passim*; (1988): 'The towns of northern Italy: rebirth or renewal?', 16-27. References in Potter (1995: 68).



Countryman (1980: 105) points out, 'the claim on the giver consisted not in need, but in some pre-existing personal relationship'. For Christians it was essentially the poor or the indigent for whom alms were intended.<sup>35</sup> According to Cameron (1993a: 127) this change, from civic benefactions to alms for the poor, reflected a withdrawal of the propertied upper classes from their traditional civic role and direct involvement in the political crisis of the barbarian threat, while at the same time through almsgiving they could perpetuate their status as patrons in another form. To some extent the interests of the Church and of wealthy local élites became fused. The identification of the civic and the religious can be clearly illustrated in the African context by the repercussions flowing from the suppression of the Donatist Church. When Donatists could no longer hold office, protect their property by law or pass it on to heirs by valid testament [Aug., *Serm.* 107.8], they lost the support of the wealthy and powerful families.

### WOMEN'S CIVIC ROLE

Just as the male benefactors were modelled on the role of the emperor as chief benefactor to the various populations of the Empire,<sup>36</sup> so too was the empress a model for the wives of senators and municipal figures. Of the four types of patronage mentioned above only the second, namely of an advocate over someone he is representing, was not possible for women, since women could not practice law.<sup>37</sup> All other types of patronage were viable, and were in fact exercised by women.<sup>38</sup> Women could be *patronae* of those of lower status, of freedmen and women, and of communities represented by colleges or municipalities.<sup>39</sup> Women's patronage included direct material benefits conferred upon the recipient as well as indirect benefits, for example mediation with influential individuals.<sup>40</sup> Our evidence for women's *liberalitas* is derived in the main from the same two sources as for male benefactors: inscriptions which record donations by women, in their capacity as priestesses or a private capacity; and inscriptions in which the city thanks a particular individual for her largesse.

Studies have shown that women in the Roman provinces could attain the highest religious offices, the *sacerdos publica* and the flamine. Female patronage across the Empire is most evident over the period from the 1<sup>st</sup> to the 3<sup>rd</sup> century AD (MacMullen 1986a: 434-443). There is however a clear differentiation between the Eastern and the Western provinces of the Empire. In the East, Van Bremen's studies (1983 and 1996) have collected a large volume of evidence for female patronage and *liberalitas*, and even some evidence for civic positions occupied by women, such as archon and gymnasiarch. Van Bremen (1983: 224) concludes that 'Women appear

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<sup>35</sup> Occasionally very wealthy Christians such as Melania the Younger sold their estates and gave the proceeds to local churches or to the poor. COUNTRYMAN (1980): *The rich Christian in the Church of the Early Empire*, 118, notes that abandonment of property was never the norm for the early lay Christians. Individuals such as Melania were clearly out of the ordinary.

<sup>36</sup> On the dissemination of the emperor's image as benefactor throughout the empire, see the essay by GORDON (1990a): 'The veil of power: emperors, sacrificers and benefactors', 201-234.

<sup>37</sup> See p. 257.

<sup>38</sup> General articles for the whole Empire: MACMULLEN (1980): 'Women in public in the Roman Empire' and (1986a): 'Women's power in the principate'; NICOLS (1989): 'Gender and civic patronage'.

<sup>39</sup> Patronage of *collegia* was very common in Italy, but rare in Roman Africa (Nicols 1989: 137).

<sup>40</sup> The legal details of patronage are outlined in JACQUES (1984): *Le privilège de liberté. Politique impériale et autonomie municipale dans les cités de l'Occident romain (161-244)* Appendix 6: 'La législation et la jurisprudence à propos de l'évergétisme', 766-786, a useful collection of extracts from the *Digest*, *Codex* as well as from the letters of Pliny. How these laws deal with women as patrons is discussed by VAN BREMEN (1996): *The limits of participation*, 47-54, but essentially they do not mention female patronage as a separate issue.



to have rendered the same social, political and financial services to their cities as their male fellow citizens', although of course their numbers are far smaller than that of men. She ascribes this to the Hellenistic influence on the 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> centuries AD. The incidence of female involvement in civic life in the Latin West is smaller by comparison. There are no civic positions occupied by women, although in Roman Africa and to a lesser extent central Italy, a fair number of female benefactors are attested. The only evidence in Roman Africa that may possibly be compared to the civil offices of women in the East is that women became patrons of communities, a position which would include them, at least in theory, in an official position among the municipal decurions, even if they had never held secular office.<sup>41</sup> The two extant registers (from Thamugadi and Canusium), however, have no women listed among their *patrones*, but Nicols (1989: 132) believes that this may be explained by the fact that the *alba* did not include all descendants of patrons co-opted by these two cities. Women may therefore still have been included on the *alba* of other *municipia*, just as in other anomalous cases women were included in a predominantly male register.<sup>42</sup>

MacMullen (1980: 214) in discussing the high priestesses of the imperial cult in Asia, is of the opinion that women who held prestigious offices only did so because they were married to men who held parallel high offices, and that it is not possible to find any real cultic and civic functions on the part of women. A number of studies have now proved this argument to have been misguided,<sup>43</sup> at least in the Greek East. It remains to be seen from the evidence collected in the remainder of this chapter whether women's priesthoods in Roman Africa answer to MacMullen's definition or not.

## WOMEN'S PATRONAGE UNRELATED TO PRIESTHOODS

Under this heading is included, firstly, patronage for individual men or women (as opposed to the community at large in the sense discussed above). Precedents for this can be found elsewhere in the Roman Empire, for example the empress Livia's contributions to the dowries of some senatorial daughters, which made her so popular with this group [Dio 58.2.3; Tac., *Ann.* 1.14].<sup>44</sup> Secondly are included benefactions limited to private estates, without a broader public aspect and where this is not linked to any priestly office. Our information for this type of patronage is fairly scanty, and in most cases women are honoured together with their husbands in gratitude for joint-patronage. It is difficult to tell whether in these cases women were merely honorary appendages or whether they were really substantively involved, since the particular type of patronage is not always mentioned, nor which individual was chiefly responsible for it. In other cases, we are more fortunate since our evidence either informs us about the woman individually, or allows us to reconstruct what kind of benefactions a particular woman had granted.

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<sup>41</sup> Municipal patrons were co-opted and included in the registers (*alba*). As honorary members patrons had the highest ranking on the *alba* (Nicols 1989: 118).

<sup>42</sup> NICOLS (1989): 'Gender and civic patronage', 132, mentions one case in Roman Italy, Valeria Severina, who was noted as the *patrona* of a *collegium* and listed with male patrons.

<sup>43</sup> The opposite has been proved for example by KRAEMER (1992): *Her share of the blessings* in general, and especially VAN BREMEN (1996): *The limits of participation* on women in the East.

<sup>44</sup> DIXON (1988): *The Roman Mother*, 216, points out that this was an extension of her maternal role, and the senate in turn acknowledged Livia with the title *mater patriae*. A more detailed account of Livia's patronage is found in TORJESEN (1993): *When women were priests*, 94-98. Ironically in the financial sense it was easier to benefit a complete stranger than one's own wife, or husband, since gift-giving between husband and wife was controlled by law (see Chapter 10 and also CROOK (1990): 'His and hers', on this aspect).

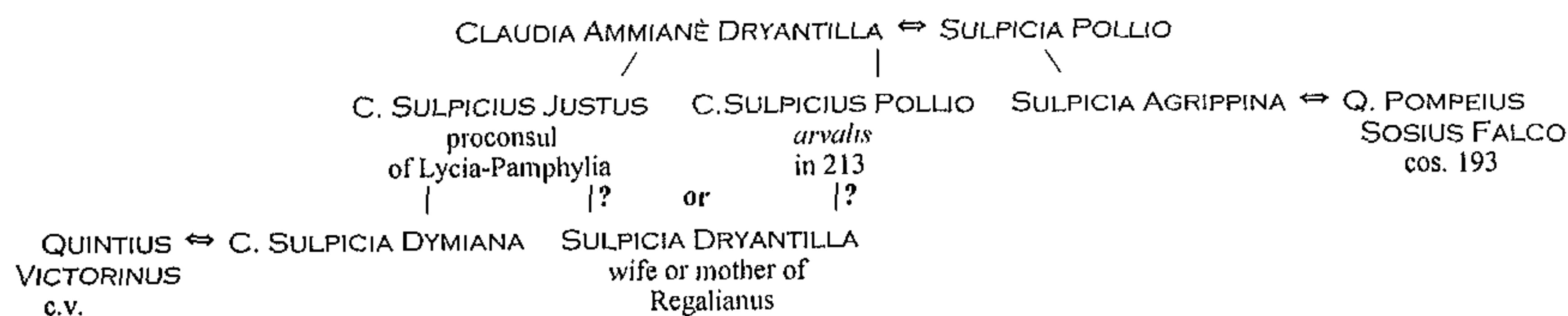


## I. Private patronage of individuals

In the case of the senatorial Sulpicia Dymiana (referred to in Chapter 10) her individual patronage of one Calpurnius Gabinius is specifically recorded, the inscription itself found at the entrance to a house on the side of the staircase:<sup>45</sup>

UTIQUE (UTICA) [AE 1964, 179]  
 'EYKOMI<sup>46</sup> | C(AIAE) SULPICIAE [C(AII) F(ILIAE)] | DYMIANAE C(LARISSIMAE) F(EMINAE) | CONIUGI QUIN[TII] |  
 VICTORINI C(LARISSIMI) V(IRI) FIL(IAE) | C(AII) SULPICI IUSTI C(LARISSIMI) V(IRI) | CALPURNIUS GABINI[US] |  
 PATRONAE  
 Lovely-haired lady! For Gaia Sulpicia Dymiana, daughter of Gaius, woman of the senatorial class, wife of Quintus Victorinus, of the senatorial class, daughter of Gaius Sulpicius Iustus, of the senatorial class, Calpurnius Gabinius (had this made) for his patroness.

Quintus Victorinus and Sulpicia Dymiana were evidently the owners of the house.<sup>47</sup> Of the three persons mentioned in the inscription only her father is known. He was either the father or the uncle of the empress Sulpicia Dryantilla, wife of the usurper Regalianus (AD 260), which makes Sulpicia Dymiana either her sister or her cousin:



Veyne (1961-2: 12) is dubious about a woman being honoured in the manner of the inscription quoted above, concluding that the inscription should simply be read as a traditional (meaningless) honouring of the wife of his true patron, Quintus Victorinus. He prefers to see the honouring of a patroness in this manner as proof of the unity of the married couple in the 4<sup>th</sup> century. Moreover, 'Il doit s'agir, le plus souvent, de bases jumelles don't une seule a été retrouvée' (1961-2: 14). This is a possible solution to a problem created by the author when in fact no problem exists. It was hardly unusual to see a freedperson erecting an epitaph to a patroness, for example:<sup>48</sup>

KSAR FARAOUN (VOLUBILIS) [CIL 24827; AE 1987, 1113]  
 D(IS) M(ANIBUS) | CAECILIA M[US(A)] IACET IN | T(E)LICIS(S)IMA, VIXIT ANNO | RUM XXXX, C(A)ECI | LIA  
 E(U)TORPE (SIC) PA | TRON(A)E | POSUIT  
 Consecrated to the spirits of the departed. Caecilia Musa lies here, a most perceptive woman, who lived 40 years, Caecilia Eutorpe erected this for her patroness.<sup>49</sup>

As pointed out in Chapter 2, clients and dependents were outward signs of power and status for men, and this

<sup>45</sup> A detailed discussion of this inscription in VEYNE (1961-2): 'Une parente de Régalien à Utique'; see also PFLAUM (1972): 'A propos d'une inscription d'Utique' with a correction regarding the use of the *praenomen*.

<sup>46</sup> Veyne (1961-2: 15) traces the family's connections in the Greek East which explains the foreign *signum* at the beginning: 'sa famille était plus grecque que romaine' (1961-2: 15). Εὐκομί is the vocative of a *signum*, Εὐκόμις, a late form of Εὐκόμιος, used for both men and women.

<sup>47</sup> The absence of *l(ocus) d(atus) d(ecreto) d(ecurionem)* indicates that the inscription is a private affair.

<sup>48</sup> Some other prominent examples: Vergilia Florentina, wife of Iulius Fortunatus, *leg. pr. pr.*, patroness of Aemilius Florus [AE 1917/18, 52] (Lambaesis). Virria Flavia Severina Petronia, daughter of M. Virrius Flavius Iugurtha, *eq. R. fl. pp.*, patroness of the Pompeii, Fuscus and Felix [AE 1909, 156] (Thamugadi). Other women also received patronage from patronesses, for example Caninia Salsa erected an inscription *ob merita* to her patroness, Aelia Flavina, the wife of a *classici proc. Aug.* In this type of honorary context, *merita* may best be translated as 'financial favours' (Forbis 1990: 500).

<sup>49</sup> An explicit example of a freedman erecting an epitaph for his patroness is quoted on p. 267 below [CIL 8993].



may have been thought to have been incompatible with the essentially or ideally private status of women.<sup>50</sup> It is possibly a modern construct to see the dedication of a freedman to a patroness as improper, although certainly more intimate relationships between freedmen and senatorial women were thought scandalous.<sup>51</sup> But someone of Sulpicia Dymiana's stature probably benefited many individuals by her patronage. The freedman Calpurnius Gabinius may have been attached to the family, even though to judge by his names he was not freed by them. Possibly he looked after the property in Utica while his patroness lived elsewhere. Another instance where a woman living at Rome owned a house in an African city has already been mentioned.<sup>52</sup> The inscription erected by Calpurnius Gabinius dates to the 3<sup>rd</sup> century, by which time the *praenomen* had fallen into disuse except for members of the senatorial class or as a survival of aristocratic affectation in the case of freedpersons. Quintius Victorinus, *clarissimus vir*, however, does not bear this distinction. It seems quite clear that in the context of the inscription Quintius Victorinus is here of less importance than Sulpicia Dymiana to whom the inscription is dedicated.

Individual patronage certainly continued during the Christian era, in one instance between wealthy landowners and Augustine as bishop. Augustine himself was acquainted with two women, one in Rome and one in Africa, both of whom he seems to have viewed as patrons and whose support he was very much in need of.<sup>53</sup> Fabiola the Younger resided in Rome and Augustine's letters to her [*Ep.* 20 (*Divj.*); 267] indicate how desirous he was of her support in controlling a rebellious young bishop from Africa who was currently residing with her in Rome. The young man, Antoninus, had been appointed to a bishopric at Fussala by Augustine but because of his fraudulent dealings had been deposed by Augustine and the African Council. Antoninus was now in Rome for the purpose of appealing to Pope Celestine. With his own reputation at stake, Augustine was dependent on a *patrona* to assist him in resolving the issue.

In his letter to Fabiola Augustine makes much of one of his allies, another *patrona*, already discussed in Chapter 12. Frend (1983: 504) notes that Augustine was dependent on the goodwill of the wealthy estate owners in this area since it had formerly been overwhelmingly Donatist and the Catholics were trying to gain a foothold here after the Donatist defeat of 411 (see the events outlined in Appendix B).<sup>54</sup> Augustine's purported confidence in the word of this woman (for example he tells Fabiola that he carried her letter about with him, so valuable was it as evidence against Antoninus) was probably more one of respect for her wealth and power than genuine admiration for her judgement, since his attitude to women in general can at best be said to be condescending (Power 1995: 215-227; La Porte and Weaver 1981b: 115-131). Such ambiguous relationships between the Church fathers and wealthy and powerful women are also attested in a number of cases outside Africa.<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> See above p. 36.

<sup>51</sup> See the discussion on p. 82.

<sup>52</sup> See p. 249.

<sup>53</sup> See above discussion, p. 247.

<sup>54</sup> See Appendix B and also LANCEL (1972): *Actes de la Conférence de Carthage en 411* and (1974): *Gesta conlationis Carthaginensis, anno 411. Accedit Sancti Augustini Breviculus Conlationis cum Donatistis/ cura et studio Serge Lancel.*

<sup>55</sup> The most prominent of these is Jerome, but other examples are discussed in POWER (1995): *Veiled desire: Augustine's writing on women* and in more detail by LA PORTE (1981a): *The role of women in Early Christianity.*



## II. Estate patronage

The following inscription is an example of family patronage where husband and wife and even future generations are honoured by dependents who clearly had an interest in doing so. The inscription was erected by the Libyco-Punic peasants engaged in building of a fortified homestead for the family in the region of modern Hr. al-Guesiret in Tripolitania:

[CIL 22774]<sup>56</sup>

HR. EL GUESIRET	IN HIS PR(A) EDIIS M(ARCUS) M(ANILIUS) INGENU(U)S	
M	V(IR) D(EVOTISSIMUS) ET ARELLIA	A
A	NEPOTILLA H(ONESTA) M(ATRONA), UXOR EIUS ET	R
N	FILI(I), NEPOTES, PRO	E
I	NEPOTESQUE EORUM VIVANT SENESCENT ET MELIO	L
L	RA PERFICIENT TURRI PERFECTA DISPOSITIONI	L
I	EORUNDEM	I
O	PER INSTANTIA(M) AURELI(I) VITA[LIS] SER(VI)	O
R	ACT(ORIS) EORUM, INSTRUMENTI	R
V	BUS A SOLO RUF[NO]RI [...]E, SENEZIONE	V
M	QUAD(RATORIO) ET	M
	SIG[...], AMATORES DOMUS EORUM.	

May Marcus Manilius Ingenuus, most devoted man, and Arellia Nepotilla, woman of the equestrian order, his wife, and their sons, grandsons and great-grandsons live till old age on his estates and may they complete to even better perfection their fortified homestead. Through the perseverance of Aurelius Vitalis, their slave overseer, with the builder who erected the whole structure, Rufin..., Senecio, stonecutter, and the ... , lovers of their household.

Well-wishing by dependents can of course not be taken too literally, especially since the peasants have hedged their bets by including the next two generations. On the other hand, Arellia Nepotilla clearly came from an important equestrian family, as indicated by her family name along the right side of the inscription. The peasants were paying homage to her while her husband was alive, but also to ensure her continued support in case her husband predeceased her. Should the latter situation eventuate, the following recorded actions of the widowed Antonia Saturnina could very well be the result:<sup>57</sup>

[CIL 8280 = ILS 6869]

AİN MECHIRA  
ANTONIA L(UCII) F(ILIA) SATURNINA VICU(M) | ET NUNDINA(S) V KAL(ENDAS) ET V IDUS SUI | CUISQUE MENSIS  
CONSTITUIT.

Antonia Saturnina, daughter of Lucius, erected a village and instituted market days on the fifth day before the Calends and the fifth day before the Ides of each month.

The inscription, dated to the 2<sup>nd</sup> century, was found near modern 'Aïn Mechira, which lies across the Numidian border between ancient Cirta and Diana Veteranorum. As discussed above, Antonia Saturnina was the widow of C. Arrius Pacatus, a wealthy senator from Cirta.<sup>58</sup> Certain 'paternalistic' financial responsibilities seem to have devolved on her upon the death of her husband,<sup>59</sup> responsibilities which, according to this inscription, she clearly met. She probably inherited the land and wealth of her husband and also it seems that she did not have children of her own (she is indicated as the aunt of *clarissimi viri*, Antoninus, Maximus and Pacatus, in the inscription quoted below, CIL 7032). Other inscriptions which mention the setting up of markets indicate that it was commonly a financial responsibility 'requested' from a prominent and wealthy citizen (Nollé 1982: 11-

<sup>56</sup> Reference given in SHAW (1984b): 'Water and society in the ancient Maghrib', 170 n.211.

<sup>57</sup> A parallel example from Spain: a woman with no title builds baths on her own land for the people of Tagili; provides circuses, a banquet and an endowment of 10 000 sesterces to maintain the baths in perpetuity. Discussed in CURCHIN (1983): 'Personal wealth in Roman Spain', 237-244.

<sup>58</sup> Antonia Saturnina has already been mentioned as a large landowner in Chapter 11, p. 247. See also PIR<sup>2</sup>, A 898.

<sup>59</sup> Note the naming of the village for her husband's family (mentioned below).



58). The *nundinae* were rural fairs, much like modern *souks*, held on different days of the week.<sup>60</sup> Periodic rural fairs are to be distinguished from the urban market or *macellum/mercatus*.<sup>61</sup> In the African context the two did not, as sometimes happened in Italy, amalgamate but remained separate (Potter 1995: 63; Shaw 1981b: 72). At the *nundinae* locals could buy the products from travelling merchants,<sup>62</sup> and nearby farmers could sell crops and animals. It could also be that Antonia's market was set up to sell the produce of her own farm.

Since the inscription was found on the border between Numida and Mauretania, it is likely that Antonia Saturnina's property was in an exempt *territorium* (Nollé 1982: 133). The necessity for a water supply at such a market (for watering animals and slaughtering)<sup>63</sup> would indicate that Antonia's *nundina* was situated on the road between the veteran colony Diana and Cirta, the second city of Africa - certainly an advantageous position for trade in facilitating the transport of goods and the presence of buyers. Shaw (1981b: 61) mentions that it was also located on the frontier of two economic zones - the tell northwards and the semi-desert regions to the south, and 'dominated one of the most frequently used routes into the Constantine Plain'.

The village of Antonia Saturnina was named *vicus Pacatensis* for her husband's family (Shaw 1981b: 62 n2). It was most likely built for farm workers, either *coloni* or even slaves. Figures from Italy indicate that for about 300 inhabitants, the amount needed to build such a village would be 500 000 sesterces (Duncan-Jones 1974: 229 n.645), figures relating to Roman Africa would be lower, but we have no indication as to the number of residents involved in this case. Garnsey (1978: 225) suspects that 'a large number of villages in North Africa were loosely linked to, if not fully integrated with, villa-based estates'.<sup>64</sup> Facilities such as markets were no doubt an added attraction.<sup>65</sup> Shaw (1981b: 63) points out that, apart from the enhancement of one's image as patron, village markets had other benefits: taxation, labour and administrative control. Roman owners of *latifundiae* were also wary of any independent urban development near their domain 'that might give rise to a parallel organizational structure independent of that on the domain'.

For whatever Antonia Saturnina accomplished, she was duly honoured as a patroness:

CONSTANTINE (CIRTA)

[CIL 7032 = ILALGI 616]

ANTONIAE | L(UCI) FIL(AE) | SATURNINAE | CONIUGI C(AII) ARRI | PACATI MATERTERAE ARRIO | RUM  
ANTONINI, MAXI | MI, PACATI, CLARISSI | MORUM VIRO RUM. L(UCIUS) ANTONIUS | CASSIANUS LIB(ERTUS) |  
PATRONAE MERENTI | LIBENS A(NIMO) S(UA) P(ECUNIA) P(OSUIT) D(ECRETO D(ECURIONUM)  
For Antonia Saturnina, daughter of Lucius, wife of Gaius Arrius Pacatus, aunt of the Arrii, Antoninus, Maximus and Pacatus, senatorial men. Lucius Antoninus Cassianus, freedman, for his deserving patroness, erected this of his own free will with his own money. By decurial decree.

The fact that the inscription is erected *decreto decurionum* is a public acknowledgement of her status and that of her family in Roman African society.

<sup>60</sup> Further examples in PAVIS D'ESCURAC (1981): 'Nundinae et vie rurale dans l'Afrique romaine' 251-259.

<sup>61</sup> LASSÈRE (1977): *Ubique populus*, 385 and n.189, lists a number of markets of both types known from African inscriptions.

<sup>62</sup> Apuleius mentions in his *Metamorphoses* [3.29.6] a busy village thronged on market day, and in the *Florida* [9.81] some of the products that would be sold at such a market, for example oil flasks and bath utensils.

<sup>63</sup> NOLLÉ (1982): *Nundinas instituere et habere*, 132, assumes its proximity to a spring.

<sup>64</sup> See above p. 239.

<sup>65</sup> The connection of a *vicus* and a market is also not unusual. Such a combination was for example instituted by one Phosphoros [AE 1913, 226], also in the region of Cirta, which he named after himself.



### III. *Patronae municipii*

In discussing the patronage exercised by senatorial women, Raepsaet-Charlier (1993: 269) specifies a number of identifying features: 'un évergétisme féminin généralement indépendant de fonctions ou d'obligations, un évergétisme africain très caractéristique (surtout sous les Sévères), un nombre appréciable de dédicaces officielles à des femmes sénatoriales en relation ou non avec des libéralités, un plus rare patronat féminin, ainsi que des prêtrises'. In Roman Africa 14 such civic *patronae* (including two of equestrian status) can be identified with certainty:

TABLE I. *PATRONAE OF AFRICAN CITIES*<sup>66</sup>

NR <sup>67</sup>	NAME	REFERENCE	PERIOD	STATUS	PLACE
4	Rania Flavia	<i>AE</i> 1993, 1748	3 <sup>rd</sup> century	senatorial	Ammaedara
5	Flavia ?	Benzina ben Abdallah (1977)	3 <sup>rd</sup> century	<i>egregiae memoriae</i> <sup>68</sup>	Ammaedara
11	Iulia Memmia	<i>ILA</i> 454	180-190	senatorial	Bulla Regia
12	Aradia Roscia	<i>CIL</i> 14470	late 3 <sup>rd</sup> cent.	senatorial	Bulla Regia
14 & 169	Vibia Aurelia (2 x)	Warmington (1954: nr. 208); <i>CIL</i> 5328	211-212	senatorial	Thibilis & Calama
80	Seia Potitia	<i>ILA</i> 511	3 <sup>rd</sup> century	senatorial	Thibaris
81	Calpurnia Aemiliana	<i>AE</i> 1995, 1653	3 <sup>rd</sup> century	senatorial	Thibica
91	Aelia Celsinilla	<i>ILA</i> 414	3 <sup>rd</sup> century	senatorial	Thuburbo Minus
124	Accia Asclepianilla	<i>CIL</i> 1181	3 <sup>rd</sup> century	senatorial	Utica
124	Accia Heuresis	<i>CIL</i> 1181	3 <sup>rd</sup> century	senatorial	Utica
124	Gallonia Octavia	<i>CIL</i> 1181	3 <sup>rd</sup> century	senatorial	Utica
130	Oscia Modesta	<i>CIL</i> 23832	238	senatorial	Aviocalla (Num.)
131	Fabia Victoria	<i>CIL</i> 7043	3 <sup>rd</sup> century	equestrian	Cirta
143	Ulpia Aristonica	<i>AE</i> 1933, 70	183	senatorial	Diana Veteranorum

What is noteworthy is that of the western provinces only central Italy and North Africa have any evidence of such female patrons (Nicols 1989: 120-121). Nicols (1989: 140) lists thirteen *patronae* for the West, ten of whom are connected to African communities. Africa Proconsularis has the highest number, while eastern Numidia gives evidence of two women who were civic patrons. Only twenty-one inscriptions recording female patrons of communities have been found for the Empire as a whole, as opposed to more than 1200 for male patrons in the same category. Taken in the context of the African regions themselves, however, the ratio of women to men is 1 : 8 (Africa Proc.) and 1 : 11 (Eastern Numidia) (Nicols 1989: 122), clearly more favourable

<sup>66</sup> The first nine of the tabulated examples given here are listed as *patronae municipii* in CORBIER (1982): 'Les familles clarissimes d'Afrique proconsulaire'.

<sup>67</sup> Numbers in this table are linked to the table numbers in Appendix A.

<sup>68</sup> According to BENZINA-BEN ABDALLAH ET AL (1977): '*Egregiae memoriae filia?*', 163, the term was used of women who were born of senatorial families but married to equestrians.



to female participation.

Nicols (1989: 136) has suggested that there may have been some Hellenistic influence on the North African communities regarding the adoption and honouring of *patronae municipii*: 'In so far as North Africa was concerned, the Punic, Semitic and Hellenistic background of the cities may well constitute a major factor in the tradition of cooptation'. If this were the case, one would expect at least one such *patrona* to originate from the area where these cultures were the strongest, Tripolitania, but there is no evidence of any. We do have a number of male patrons for cities like Lepcis Magna and Sabratha.<sup>69</sup> Direct Punic, Semitic or Hellenistic influence therefore seems an unlikely solution to the question of why North Africa has such a large sample of women as municipal patrons. Septimius Severus' marriage to the Syrian Julia Domna may have reinforced this Hellenistic tradition throughout the Empire, and that their patronage of African cities such as Lepcis Magna intensified the effect in Africa.

The explanation for the large proportion of female municipal patrons may at least partly be found in the fact that in a number of cases the women were natives of the cities they patronised: Iulia Memmia belonged to the consular Memmii family. She was the daughter of C. Memmius Iulius Albius [*ILA* 454], a native of Bulla Regia. Oscia Modesta Cornelia Publina was the mother of the consul C. Arrius Calpurnius Longinus [*CIL* 23831], also originally a native of Aviocalla. Seia Potita was a native of Thibaris, while Aradia Roscia was of African origin like her kinsman Q. Arranius Valerius Proculus [*CIL* VI 1685] (Warmington 1954: 42). Flavia, the daughter of Titus Flavius, was a native of Ammaedara. In other cases male kin were appointed to office from which the connection to a particular community arose: Aelia Celsinilla was the mother of a *consularis vir* who was appointed as *curator rei publicae* of Thuburbo Minus, and we may note that in her case the term *patrona perpetua* is used, possibly since neither she nor her family were natives of the province.<sup>70</sup> Gallonia Octavia was the wife of C. Paccius Julianus Asclepianus, also appointed to the same office in Utica, while their daughter Accia Heresis Venantia was a native of the city. Ulpia Aristonica was the wife of M. Valerius Maximianus (*leg. Aug. pr. pr.*), whose family originated from Diana Veteranorum [*CIL* 4600], while Vibia Aurelia Sabina, the sister of Commodus, became a patroness of Thibilis, the birthplace of her husband, L. Antistius Burrus.

The above table shows that female patrons of African communities are more or less centred on the 3<sup>rd</sup> century AD, and that all but two (one of equestrian status, the other of equestrian status by marriage) are of senatorial standing. Nicols (1989: 123) explains the concentration of senatorial patronesses in this period with reference to the Severan dynasty and the prominence given to empresses under their reign. Official prominence had already been granted to empresses under the Antonines, however, for example the title of *mater castrorum* given to Faustina, the consort of Marcus Aurelius, or the use of the *dextrarium iunctio* between the imperial couple in public sculpture,<sup>71</sup> and it is possible that the inclusion of women in public events with official recognition may already have taken root then. It is certainly true that this prominence reached its culmination

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<sup>69</sup> WARMINGTON (1954): 'The municipal patrons of Roman North Africa', 43, lists 44 male municipal patrons for Tripolitania. *IRT* 449 could refer to Iulia Mammea, the mother of Alexander Severus, as a patroness of Lepcis Magna, but because of a lacuna in the inscription it is not certain that she was the patron.

<sup>70</sup> See p. 257 n. 15 above.

<sup>71</sup> The use of titles such as *clarissima femina* and *femina consularis* were apparently acquired at this time, according to the jurist of the period, Ulpian (Nicols 1989: 139).



in Julia Domna and her immediate successors, and it is also likely that this would have transmitted itself to women of the senatorial order who were, in terms of status, next in line. All but one of the patronesses of Africa Proconsularis (nr. 14/169) can be shown to have consular connections. For Numidia there is one *patrona* of the equestrian order, the other is also senatorial. In the case of Roman African men, Warmington (1954) finds a more or less equal balance between senatorial and equestrian patrons of communities, whereas from the above it appears that for women, senatorial status was almost invariably the case (approximately 92%) where patronage was concerned. It would seem that, as women, communities required the highest status from them.

In the cases of Accia Asclepianilla, Accia Heuresis and Gallonia Octavia, the women are included in the broader context of the nuclear family to whom the dedication is made, and Fabia Victoria is honoured together with her husband, both as *patrones*. But the dedications to Aelia Celsinilla, Aradia Roscia, Iulia Memmia, Seia Potita, Vibia Aurelia, Ulpia Aristonica, Calpurnia Aemiliana, Flavia and Rania Flavia are to each woman alone, although male relatives are mentioned in each case. The inscriptions themselves emphasize the consular status of the women's husbands or other male relatives, even when these are not themselves known as patrons (Nicols 1989: 129).<sup>72</sup> Male relatives were therefore used to give status to the women who acted as benefactors, and women were therefore not honoured as much in their own capacity as in the fact that they were members of powerful families. Only in one case, that of Oscia Modesta, is she honoured singly and alone (without her relatives) as the *patrona* of Aviocalla.

Inscriptions from which *patronae* can be identified usually contain a formula which links the individual to a particular community, for example inscriptions authorized by a decurial decree to honour that individual, such as in the case of Antonia Saturnina cited above. Apart from the additional emphasis on senatorial status, epigraphically no distinction is made between male and female patrons. The inscriptions for women, as for men, are largely formulaic:

BIR MAGRA (THIBICA) [AE 1995, 1653]  
 CALPUR[NIAE] CE[ILIAE] AEMI[LIANA] C(LARISSIMAE) F(EMINAE) | CONIUGI Q(UINTI) ARA[DI] RUFINI  
 C(LARISSIMI) V(IRI) C(IVITAS) T(HIBICAAENSIS) sic D(ECRETO) D(ECURIONUM) PATRONAE.  
 To Calpurnia Ceia Aemiliana, woman of the senatorial order, wife of Quintus Aradus Rufinus, of the senatorial order. The *civitas* of Thibica erected this by order of the decurions for their patroness.

Others are only slightly more specific in commenting on the nature of the benefactions:

HAÏDRA (AMMAEDARA) [BENZINA BEN ABDALLAH ET AL (1977)]  
 [FLAVIAE ?] | T(ITI) FLAV[II-] | E(GREGIAE) M(EMORIAE) (VIRI) F(ILIAE) OB ME[RITA ET INSIG]NEM  
 SINGU[LAREM] Q(UE) | MUNIFICENTIAM EIUS | IN ORDINEM ET PO[PULUM] | COLONIAE AMMA[EDA]RENSIS  
 PATRIAE SUAE [DE] | CURIONES COLLA[TA] PE[CUNIA] POSUER[UNT] D(ECRETO) D(ECURIONEM) ?].  
 To Flavia ?, daughter of Titus Flavius, woman of equestrian rank, in honour of her merits and for her remarkable and extraordinary munificence towards the senate and the people of the colony of Ammaedara, her patria. The decurions have erected this by a public collection. By decurial decree.

The dedications themselves almost never make reference to any specific action or benefaction on the part of the patroness, and tend to be general and honorific, referring to *liberalitas* (nr. 80) or *ob merita* (nr. 130), in other words financial donations. This is the same as in the case for male benefactors of communities. Since neither the benefactor, nor those who benefited from the patronage, as a rule give any specific information, it was possibly considered bad form to mention these details. While promises of funds to the community are commonly required elsewhere, for example on entering the flaminiate, no such promises are made for being

<sup>72</sup> This is different from other positions such as the flaminiate, where women were often *flaminicae* because their husbands were *flamines*. See the discussion on this aspect below, pp. 311-312.



honoured as patron of a community. Details of a benefaction are only mentioned in one exceptional case, that of Iulia Memmia, *clarissima et nobilissima femina*. The inscription was found in the *thermae* at Bulla Regia.<sup>73</sup>

HAMMAM DARRADJI (BULLA REGIA)

[ILA 454]

[IUL]IAE ME[M]MIAE | [PRIS?]CAE RUF[AE] AEMIL|[IANA]E FIDIA[NAE] CLARIS|[SIMAE ET NOBILIS]S[IMAE  
F]EMINAE | [C(AI) MEMMI I]UL(I) ALBI CONSULARIS | [VIRI PATR]ONI ET ALUMNI FIL(IAE) OB | [PRAECIPU]AM  
OPERIS SUI THERMARUM | [MAGNIFI]CENTIAM QUA ET PATRIAM | [SUAM E]XORNANAVIT ET SALUTI CIVIUM |  
[.....]ICO CONSULERE | [DIGNATA] EST | BENE ET EIUS | [.....PA]TRONAE ET .....

To Iulia Memmia Prisca Rufa Aemiliana Fidiana, a woman of most noble senatorial family, daughter of C. Memmius Fidus Iulius Albius, a man of consular rank and patron and native of the city, on account of the outstanding magnificence of her work, the baths, by which she both beautified her hometown and looked after the health of its citizens .... she was worthy .... well and her ..... to the patroness....

No other type of benefaction, such as *sportulae* or *ludi*, can be attributed to a municipal patroness, although the benefactions of other Roman African women are recorded with such details, as the remainder of this chapter will show.

Wealthy individuals occasionally found themselves in the position of having to deny the privilege of becoming an official patron. Wealth and status certainly came with more onerous duties, since in a sense the wealthy became public possessions. If they or their sons or daughters were married, or a member of the family passed away, a show of generosity towards the town was expected. To avoid such obligations one would have to celebrate the event away from town, even retiring from public life and living in obscurity, or hiding one's wealth, as in the case of this fictional example:

*Nec nos denique latuit Chryseros quidam nummularius copiosae pecuniae dominus, qui metu officiorum ac munerum publicorum magnis artibus magnam dissimulabat opulentiam.*

We thus discovered that a certain Chryseros, a banker and master of considerable cash, concealed his great wealth with great skill, for fear of civic duties and liturgies. [Metam. 4.9]

Fronto [Ep. ad Amic. 2.11], having made donations to the city of Cirta in the past, refused the honour of becoming its patron. Although such obligations were less of a burden in the case of women, Apuleius explains that Pudentilla found herself in a similar position:

*Habes, Aemiliane, causam totam, cur tabulae nuptiales inter me ac Pudentillam non in oppido sint sed in villa suburbana consignatae: ne quinquaginta milia nummum denuo profundenda essent nec tecum aut apud te cenandum.*

The reason for us to be married by preference in her country house not far from Oea was to avoid a fresh concourse of citizens demanding largesse. It was but a short time before that Pudentilla had distributed 50 000 sesterces to the people on the occasion of Pontianus' marriage and this boy's assumption to the garb of manhood. [Apol. 88.]

## SOME GENERAL ASPECTS OF PRIESTESSES IN THE ROMAN AFRICAN CONTEXT

### African and Punic traditions for women in religion

A link between women and the supernatural or divine was generally assumed in Graeco-Roman antiquity. Strabo for example pronounced that women were the chief founders of religion (δεισιδαιμονία, or 'fear of the gods'), and were it not for them, men would not pay as much attention to festivals and supplications [7.3.4].

<sup>73</sup> She contributed towards the building of this sizable bath structure. Inside the staircase entrance a statue base of the consul Memmius. FAGAN (1999): *Bathing in public in the Roman world*, 288-322, gives only one other example of a private individual who builds baths in Roman Africa: *Iu[rath]han [...]*giaduris f., from Sabratha in the late 1<sup>st</sup> or early 2<sup>nd</sup> century [AE 1980, 900]. See also YEGÜL (1992): *Baths and bathing in Classical Antiquity*, 44-45.



This can hardly be said to have been reflected in official Roman religion, which was dominated by male priesthoods, but nevertheless, ancient authors such as Strabo seem to have felt that women were more intrinsically connected to religion in its deeper and less public aspect. Needless to say, this was not often viewed favourably by male authors, and in the literary evidence was usually portrayed as an element of barbarism. It also comes as no surprise that, where priesthoods were linked to political power as was the case in Rome, women's roles in official religion were limited.

Although there is not a great deal of unambiguous evidence on the subject, it is highly likely that women played an important role in indigenous cults, and native African women often performed rites relating to fertility (Decret and Fantar 1981: 269).<sup>74</sup> We get occasional glimpses of local cults even when partially overlaid by Romanization, since many native deities continued to be worshipped in caves and grottos which were served by priestesses.<sup>75</sup> One example was found near Le Kef, an epitaph to a priestess Sisoi, daughter of Missunia, who served the Libyan god Mathamodis (Decret and Fantar 1981: 263):

GUERGOUR HENCHIR (MASCULULA)

[CIL 15779]

SISOI MISSUNES FIL(IA) / SACERDOS MATHAM/ODIS PIA VIXIT / ANNIS LXXXVI / H(IC) S(ITA) E(ST).  
D(IIS) M(ANIBUS) S(ACRUM) / MAMUS SISSONIES / FILIAE PIA VIXIT ANNIS / LXXXV. CURANTE AU/RELIO  
BASTRESI FILIO.

Sisoi, daughter of Missunia, priestess of Mathamodis, lived 86 years. Here she rests.

Consecrated to the souls of the departed. Mamus, daughter of Sisoi, lived 85 years. Aurelius, son of Bastresis, took care of this.<sup>76</sup>

Mathamodis was a local African deity whose worship was possibly influenced by other cultures in its organization and even its expression, as the epitaph in Latin indicates (Bénabou 1976a: 304-305). It still retained some links with its indigenous roots, for example the descent of the priestess through the female line, which was traditional in Berber cultures. She is given the title *sacerdos*, but, despite the view of Decret and Fantar (1981: 269) that Libyan religion supported 'un corps sacerdotal organisé où la femme jouait un rôle important', there is not much evidence for organized religion of the indigenous cults (Bénabou 1976a: 302-307),<sup>77</sup> although we do know that among the Libyans chieftains were often associated with priesthoods (Bates 1970: 117).

Another area of religion also indicates native influence:

ARBAL

[CIL 21624]

DEI SANCTI AETERNI <sup>78</sup> IUSSU VA | LENTIAE IANUARIAE PROFETAE PO | MARIS DEFUNCTAE AN(N)I(N)S P(LUS)  
M(INUS) XL | ET APERTIAE VALENTIAE FIL(IAE) | EIUS QUAE VIXIT AN(N)I(S) V APPER | TIUS SORICUS UXORI  
ET DO | NATUS MATRI PISSIME

Ordered by the eternal holy gods. To Valentia Ianuaria, prophetess, died at Pomaris at the age of more or less 40 years, and to her daughter, Apertia Valentia, who lived 5 years. Appertius Soricus to his wife and Donatus for his most dutiful mother.

In this case there may be a Syrian connection, since the relief on the tombstone shows a woman and a child with clothing adorned by a sun symbol, but this does not really help to determine to what cult the prophetess in this

<sup>74</sup> The predominance of women in African religions is discussed by LOTH (1987): *Women in ancient Africa*, 133-140.

<sup>75</sup> Among the native African gods Tertullian mentions for example the Libyan goddess Varsutina Maurorum and Corippus the African equivalent of Mars, Siniferus, and of Pluto, Mastiman.

<sup>76</sup> The name Sisoi and its variants are quite common in African nomenclature (see the index of the *Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum*, Sisoi, Sisoi, Sisso, Sissonia, Sissina).

<sup>77</sup> BÉNABOU (1976a): *La résistance africaine à la romanisation* also presents a thumbnail sketch of most indigenous cults, also in tabulated form (pp. 306-307) but all evidence is for men apart from the single reference to Sisoi mentioned here.

<sup>78</sup> The *dei aeterni* are also mentioned in CIL 8923, 9074, 21581 and 18525. None of these give any indications of a Christian context.



inscription belonged, if she belonged to any. At Carthage female prophecy is also known from the temple of Caelestis, where her priestess was famous for her oracles [*SHA: Pertinax*, 4.2; *Macrinus* 3], but this may be a romantic touch common in these biographies. Female prophecy is also mentioned in the 6<sup>th</sup> century. Corippus [*Ioh.* 3.61 *passim*; 6.145-176] describes the actions of the priestess of Ammon when she is consulted by Guenfan, the father of Antalas. His description is cleverly engineered to evoke connotations of barbarism, with the added stigma of paganism in this Christian era. To emphasize the pagan and the barbaric three aspects of the cult are emphasized: blood sacrifice, possession by the god and the powers of prophecy in service of this deity.

In the Punic, as in Phoenician tradition, priesthoods had high status, were limited to a few families (Charles-Picard *et al* 1961: 76) and in some cases can be shown to have become hereditary (Warmington 1969: 150; Lipiński 1995: 454). In the pre-Roman period (from the 4<sup>th</sup> century BC) large numbers of priests are attested,<sup>79</sup> and there is evidence of a priestly hierarchy (Lipiński 1995: 458).<sup>80</sup> In the Punic period there is some evidence that the wives of priests were priestesses (Lipiński 1995: 455), who may have had authority over men and women who were temple personnel (Charles-Picard *et al* 1961: 155).<sup>81</sup> The evidence therefore points to men and women from prominent families occupying the highest rungs of the Punic priesthood.<sup>82</sup>

### **Structures in Punic and Roman traditions of priesthood<sup>83</sup>**

Roman religion did not have a multi-levelled hierarchy, but priests were organized into colleges, which were often linked with some professional or social aspect, for example burial societies and social clubs.<sup>84</sup> Although there is evidence of women in such clubs, our Roman African examples are rather unclear on the exact nature of these sororities. From Cirta we have an inscription [*ILAlg* II, 731] listing the names of women in a college probably dedicated to Ceres. In another instance, Iulia Donata [*CIL* 3762] from Lambaesis was given an epitaph by a woman named Honorata, who refers to Iulia as *sodala*, a term commonly used to indicate a religious 'sisterhood'. Also at Caesarea a sepulchre was erected to a woman named Labericia of another such sorority [*CIL* 21071]. We have no information as to the purpose of such sisterhoods, and they may not necessarily have been linked to religion.<sup>85</sup> It is possible that at least in some cases they consisted only of women, since in the Roman tradition male colleges seldom admitted women to their ranks,<sup>86</sup> although they occasionally honoured

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<sup>79</sup> At Carthage twenty priests of Astarte are known from inscriptions, of which six were also suffetes and eight were high priests. During the Hellenistic period some Eastern cities like Hierapolis and Comana had priesthoods running even to thousands (Lipiński 1995: 456).

<sup>80</sup> See for example a priestess at the head of other priestesses at *RES* 2.540.

<sup>81</sup> The Punic cults prior to Roman occupation are discussed by LIPINSKI (1995): *Dieux et déesses de l'univers phénicien et punique*, 351-416. See also the *DCPP*, 114, on Phoenician and Punic priestly traditions in general.

<sup>82</sup> For a list of the priestesses during the Punic period see GSELL (1913-1928<sup>2</sup>): *Histoire ancienne de l'Afrique du Nord*, Vol. 4, 398.

<sup>83</sup> For some general points of comparison between Punic and Roman priesthoods, see REY-COQUAIS (1988): 'Sur une comparaison entre le clergé phénicien et le clergé "africain"', 397-402.

<sup>84</sup> A good overview of this aspect can be found in LIDONNICI (1999): 'Women's religions and religious lives in the Greco-Roman city' under 'Initiation and voluntary associations', 92-95.

<sup>85</sup> There were clubs for people who came from the same town but now lived elsewhere, for those who shared certain occupations or even philosophical associations. In Rome, where we have a far greater volume of evidence, members of burial clubs for example were mostly male, but some female members are known (Hopkins 1983a: 212).

<sup>86</sup> But see the exception discussed on p. 283.



them for their munificence - one *flaminica* was for example honoured by the colleges of the *centonarii* and the *subaediani* for her *liberalitas* towards the citizens of the town [CIL 10523 = ILS 7260].

### Some general aspects of women's role in religion during the Roman period in North Africa:

#### (i) prerequisites for priestesses

While there were specific rituals for sexuality or fertility, the woman suitable for a religious role in the official Roman cults was the *matrona*. In Rome there was sometimes insistence on an *univira* with children: 'The further a woman was from matronal status, the less likely she was to play an important religious role. A woman who was a widow, elderly, of low birth or simply separated from her husband was presumed to be susceptible to superstitions of all sorts' (Scheid 1992: 405).<sup>87</sup> Tertullian is also speaking of Rome when he mentions 'monogamy' - the obligation of the *Flaminica Dialis*, the priestess of Juno, of having only one husband, while her husband, the *Flamen Dialis* and priest of Jupiter, carried the same obligation towards her [De Exhort. Cast. 13; De Monogam. 17].<sup>88</sup>

Priestesses of all ages are mentioned in inscriptions, although they are inclined to be older, particularly in the official Roman cults. The youngest, a *flaminica* named Flavia Pacata from Cillium [CIL 211], was only 15 when she died, but this was in fact highly exceptional for the flamine.<sup>89</sup> For the most part priestesses were 40 years or older, and some tombstones record priestesses who were exceptionally old, for example:

AIN MAJA

[ILA 199]

FLAVIA M(ARCI) | FIL(IA) TERTUL | [L]A SACERDOS | VIX(IT) AN(NIS) C.  
Flavia Tertulla, daughter of Marcus, priestess, lived 100 years.

We may take this information more in the spirit of propaganda for the cult than literal truth, since, as established in Chapter 8, age was coupled with status. The cult of the Cereres in particular was served by women older than 50.<sup>90</sup>

Eastern cults and especially mystery cults were distinct in their lifestyle requirements of their devotees, and purity and piety were often demanded from devotees and priesthood alike: 'les inscriptions latines d'Afrique du Nord contiennent également des allusions aux étapes de la vie sacerdotale, couronnée à 65 ans par l' "entrée sous le joug", un jubilé qui consacrait l'assujettissement total du fidèle au dieu' (Lipiński 1995: 459). Priests of Melkart or Heracles at Gades,<sup>91</sup> for example, had to observe certain rituals of purity, described by Silius Italicus as forbidding the approach of women and avoiding pork [Pun. 3.20-31]. Also in the sacred law from Thuburbo Maius [ILA 225] it seems that the prohibitions - prospective visitors to the temple of Asclepius had to abstain for three days from women, beans, pork, a visit to the barber and the public baths - are all linked in

<sup>87</sup> GAGÉ (1963): *Matronalia*, explores the roles of women in early Roman religion and that of the *univira* in archaic cults. In Roman Africa, however, there was the exception to the rule: in the cult of the Cereres, discussed below, women actually separated from their husbands to become priestesses of the cult.

<sup>88</sup> BOELS (1973): 'Le statut religieux de la Flaminica Dialis', 79, interprets this permanent marital union as symbolic of a larger union: 'elle symbolise l'union de puissances célestes et chtoniennes'.

<sup>89</sup> This inscription is discussed more fully in the section on the flamine, p. 302.

<sup>90</sup> Discussed below under that cult, p. 292.

<sup>91</sup> Diodorus Siculus also mentions that this cult was popular at Gades and at Carthage.



one way or another to sexual abstinence (Kleijwegt 1994: 213-215).<sup>92</sup>

### (ii) identifying priestesses and their cults

In the majority of inscriptions the status of a priestess is indicated in each case by the word *sacerdos* or even sometimes *sacerda*.<sup>93</sup> Many epitaphs to priestesses do not mention the particular cult, for example:

SIDI BOU BEKER [ILT 1563]  
D(IIS) M(ANIBUS) S(ACRUM) | IULIA RUFINI CONIUNX RUFINA | SACERDOS | CONDITUR HOC TUMULO  
CONTE | GITURQUE SOLO | [SA]NCTA PUDICA CASTISSI | MA MATRONARUM | V(IXIT) A(NNIS) LVII.  
Consecrated to the spirits of the departed. Julia Rufina, wife of Rufinus, priestess, was buried alone and covered with this tomb, holy, modest, most chaste of matrons, she lived 57 years.

In this case, however, the epitaph is accompanied by a relief which clearly indicates that Julia Rufina was a priestess of Ceres.<sup>94</sup> Relief sculpture occurs particularly frequently in the case of priestesses of Ceres,<sup>95</sup> although sometimes this type of evidence can be misleading, and reliefs of deities do not necessarily indicate that the deceased was a priestess of that cult. A four-sides stele from Theveste dated to the end of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century AD, and dedicated to the deceased Aelia Leporina, has one face with the inscription, another with the image of Juno, while the remaining two faces are carved with the images of Ceres and Proserpina (the Cereres).<sup>96</sup> The inscription set up by her freedman husband makes no attempt to connect the images with the deceased, and Aelia Leporina, who died at the age of 39, was too young to have been a priestess of the Cereres.<sup>97</sup> There is also no reason why images of the Cereres would be included if she had been a priestess of Juno. Le Glay (1956: 52) therefore concludes that the images of the goddesses are an attempt by her husband to reinforce his wishes for eternal life for his deceased spouse, since all three deities have strong connections with the afterlife, fertility and rebirth. Thus the stele highlights, 'le double aspect, agraire et mystique, de la religion de l'Afrique romaine' (Le Glay 1956: 52), and no priesthood for Aelia Leporina.

Where other information is lacking, the cult affiliation can also be deduced if a particular deity is invoked at the beginning of the inscription, as is the case in the inscription of Valeria Saturnina [CIL 1623], who offers a dedication in honour of Ceres. Identification is also possible if the text is accompanied by other material effects such as statues, or is found in a particular location such as a sanctuary.

### (iii) functions of priestesses

Male dominance of Roman religion was exemplified in their right to sacrifice, a right which was not generally given to women.<sup>98</sup> According to Plutarch [*Quaest. Rom.* 85], Roman women were prohibited from slaughtering,

<sup>92</sup> For comparison Porphyry [*De Abst.* 2.50] lists among the things to be avoided by seers and priests: menstruating women and sexual intercourse (Clark 1993: 78). In a non-religious context Procopius tells us that the Moorish ruler Cabaon ordered his soldiers to abstain from injustice, luxurious foods and most especially from association with women [*De Bell. Vand.* 3.8.16].

<sup>93</sup> Excluding the imperial cult, where a priestess was titled *flaminica*.

<sup>94</sup> The relief is described in CHARLES-PICARD (1954): *Les religions de l'Afrique antique*, 187-188, and an illustration of a similar relief is found in Figure 20 in the same work.

<sup>95</sup> On reliefs of priestesses in this cult see POINSSOT (1959-60): 'Suo et Sucubi'.

<sup>96</sup> All images are well illustrated in LE GLAY (1956): 'Junon et les Cereres d'après la stèle d'Aelia Leporina trouvée à Tébessa', Figures 2-5 and also in the *DCPP*, 129.

<sup>97</sup> Le Glay (1956: 44) states that the youngest priestess of Ceres appears to have been 59 years of age, although a priestess of the cult who died at 57 [CIL 1563] is known, and in fact we know that priestesses of this cult could be initiated from the age of 50 (see below).

<sup>98</sup> At Rome the wife of the *Flamen Dialis* also performed sacrifices. On this and other exceptions, see BOELS (1973): 'Le statut religieux



skinning and butchering meat, which effectively meant that in Roman religion women were excluded from any active role in sacrifices.<sup>99</sup> The act of public sacrifice required the sacrificer to issue commands, to speak in the name of the community, and this was not thought to be a role suitable to women, that they should have command over men: 'Hence we may assume [from Plutarch's mention of the prohibition regarding women and sacrifice] that, even if the rule was not strictly enforced under the Empire, it was still one of the defining characteristics of the Roman matron in the second century AD. The evidence is clear: in religion, which was always related to the expression of community power, men played the leading role in every situation' (Scheid 1992: 380).<sup>100</sup> Officially women therefore had a secondary role in Roman religion, even when they were priestesses.



FIGURE 12.1 SACRIFICIAL SCENE ON THE SEVERAN ARCH AT LEPCIS MAGNA

But the priest's role was often more show than action - he led sacrificial procession and supervised, but others did the work, since the social status of the sacrificant was marked by his separation from such exertion (Gordon 1990a: 206). In the sacrificial scene on the Arch of Severus at Lepcis Magna (Figure 12.1), the stylized role of the remaining figures is quite clear (the central panel (here shown on the left) is lost, but would presumably have portrayed Septimius Severus in the act of offering a preliminary libation). The sacrificial bull/cow is being brought forward, and the status of the *victimarii* as public slaves is indicated by their half-clad bodies, which brings them into sharp contrast with the Roman togas behind. Iulia Domna stands right of centre, making an offering of incense at an altar with her right hand, while a flute player stands beside her and the goddess Roma behind her. Her action suggests that she plays no part in the central sacrificial scene itself, although she has her

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de la Flaminica Dialis'.

<sup>99</sup> The Vestal Virgins were the exception, perhaps even to the extent of making blood sacrifices, though this cannot be proved beyond doubt. They had a sacrificial knife, the *sescepsita*, but it is not known whether it was used. The Vestals enjoyed many of the same privileges as men, since they were not *matronae* and fell under the guardianship of the *pontifex maximus* (Scheid 1992: 383). See also the comments by DE CASANOVE (1987): 'Exesto. L'incapacité sacrificielle des femmes à Rome' in this regard.

<sup>100</sup> GORDON (1990a): 'The veil of power, emperors, sacrifices and benefactors', 217-220, emphasizes the link between the image of the emperor as sacrificer and his role as benefactor, and how religious life throughout the Empire was imbued with references to the Roman ruler and his local representatives, the provincial and municipal aristocracies.



own religious role. It was unusual for an empress to be depicted at such a function as a sacrifice at all, which must be attributed to the more central role occupied by the wives of the Antonine emperors and their immediate successors.<sup>101</sup>

On a more local level we find similarities and differences to these gender roles in the Boglio stele (named for its finder) (Figure 12.2). The stele is a dedication to the harvest god Saturn, executed in a naive style with

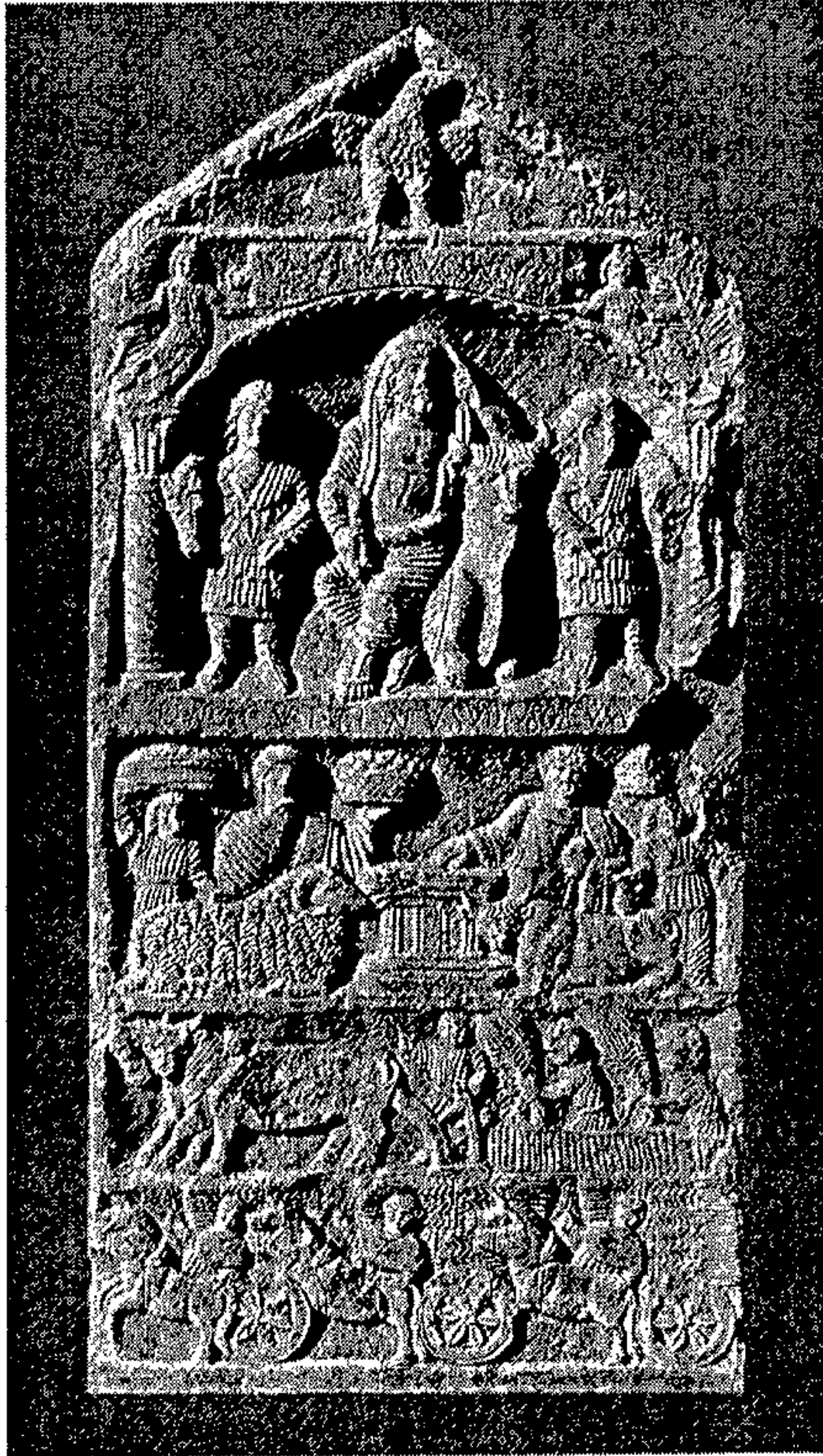


FIGURE 12.2 BOGLIO STELE

foreshortened, frontal figures.<sup>102</sup> It has five panels depicting the world of a fairly wealthy farmer,<sup>103</sup> from the farmer himself, who stands above his labouring workers in his finery, down to the most humble plane of existence, which deals with transporting the harvest. It is the panel third from the top which is of interest here. Engaged in the ritual of sacrifice, the landowner and donor, Publius Novius Cuttinus, stands before an altar sacrificing a ram and a bull. To the left a turbaned woman brings a basket of fruit. Since she and the man are both richly attired and share equal prominence in the arrangement of this panel they are presumably husband and wife. To the left and right of the sacrificing couple two young women carry baskets on their heads in the fashion of local priestesses of Ceres.<sup>104</sup> These women could be the daughters of the couple, as suggested by Soren *et al* (1990: 239), since the entire *stèle* bears one inscription simply stating that the sacrificer is Cuttinus, who together with his family has offered this monument:

P(UBLIUS) N(OVIUS) CUTTINUS VOTUM SOLVIT CUM SUIS  
Publius Novius Cuttinus, with his family, has fulfilled his  
vow.

It is clear, however, that Cuttinus is the leading figure, and that the women play a secondary role in the sacrificial process.

There is, however, some evidence from the African provinces for women who performed sacrifices. A number of inscriptions, like *CIL* 591 from Hr. Djenûn, are accompanied by a relief of a woman sacrificing, and the *stelae* of priestesses of Ceres sometimes show the sacrificial knife and the pig, which was the animal of choice in this cult (see Figure 12.8). Often, however, these references are in contradistinction to the dignity of the 'official' cults and bear the stamp of barbarism, as

<sup>101</sup> The most famous example is of course the imperial family on the Ara Pacis. See KLEINER (1978): 'The great friezes of the Ara Pacis Augustae', 753-85, on the appearance of women as a symbol of sexual and familial responsibility. Another instance is given on the monument commemorating the victory of Lucius Verus over the Parthians, in Ephesus, where women and children are also included in a frieze depicting the sacrificial ceremony.

<sup>102</sup> On the *stèle* see YACOUB (1978): *Chefs-d'oeuvre des musées nationaux de Tunisie*, 40-45.

<sup>103</sup> The worship of Saturn had strong local roots, and was worshipped by people from all levels of society. See 'Saturn' below, pp. 281-282.

<sup>104</sup> See below, p. 288.



indicated by Corippus' description of the priestess of Ammon mentioned above. In the cases of cults which were not intrinsically Roman, even if they were eventually accepted (for example the cult of the Magna Mater or Isis) it was the foreign status of the priestess that gained her exception from the rule which prevented women in traditional Roman cults from sacrificing (Scheid 1992: 385).

A number of cults had other functions or roles for priestesses.<sup>105</sup> The *lampadifera*<sup>106</sup> or torch-bearer was usually high on the ladder of sacerdotal status. This is born out by our only example from the African provinces, Fabatia Polla Fabia Domitia Gallilola, *clarissima femina*, of the cult of Cereres, which will be discussed under that heading below.<sup>107</sup> In other cults women played a variety of minor roles, for example:

PHILIPPEVILLE (RUSICADE)

[ILALG II, 72]

SITTIA URBA | NA SACERDA | CAUCARIA | V(IXIT) A(NNIS) LXXXV | H(IC) S(ITA) E(ST).

Sittia Urbana, priestess, in charge of libations, lived 95 years. Here she rests.

Such functions usually indicate the lower orders of the cult. Other humble functions for women in cults included musicians and singers. The tympanaria was particularly popular in the cult of Cybele and Liber, where the musicians were part of the procession.<sup>108</sup> *Sacratae* (initiates) and *canistrariae* (basket-carriers) were also inferior to priestesses proper (Charles-Picard 1954: 150). Hierarchy played an important role in the mystery cults, as mentioned above, and it is in these that we most often encounter initiates, individuals who were gradually inducted into the cult by means of ceremonies. Young children could also be initiates in these cults: Calventia Maiorina from Thysdrus was initiated at the age of eight, probably in the cult of Virgo Caelestis [ILT 113]. The rationale behind the initiation of the very young was the belief that those who were not initiated, also young children, lost the opportunity for 'la vie éternelle', and were doomed to eternal suffering (Le Glay 1966: 361).<sup>109</sup>

Several *canistrariae* or basket-carriers are known from the African provinces [CIL 12919 (Carthage); ILAlg I, 2033 and 2071 (Madauros); CIL 9337 and 20960 (Caesarea)]. In mystery cults sacred objects usually concealed from the uninitiated in closed baskets were 'revealed' to the initiates in a special ceremony (Le Glay 1966: 362). Something similar is referred to in the *Metamorphoses* when Psyche speaks to Ceres and refers to the *per tacita secreta cistarum* ('by the silent mysteries of your sacred coffers') [6.2]. Usually these baskets were carried by women, but it is possible that men also sometimes performed this action (*canistrarii* are mentioned in one inscription in the worship of Caelestis [ILAlg I, 2036]). But in iconography it is men who are shown carrying the chest or *cista*, while women carry the basket, the latter either on the head or on the arm (see Figure 12.9). The distinction between the two is actually specified in an inscription from Madaura [ILAlg I, 2071], where the women are *canistrariae*, the men *cistiferi*. Another inscription from Thamugadi (cult of Liber Pater) qualifies the men as *cistiferi pedisquarii*, while the women are simply *pedisquariae* [ILS 3368]. Such a distinction could

<sup>105</sup> The term *candidata* is used of Iulia Fortunula [CIL 6951 = ILAlg II, 482] in a dedication to the genius of the goddess Virtus, also known from Madauros [ILAlg I, 2073]. It is possible that she may have been a candidate for the priesthood, but since the word is used nowhere else, this cannot be certain.

<sup>106</sup> The term *lampadifera* is a direct translation of the Greek δαδοῦχος, the torch-bearer in sacred processions.

<sup>107</sup> The cult of the Cereres has delivered the second-largest corpus of inscriptions of female priesthoods, 45 in all. The highest number is found in the flaminiate, for which no less than 68 women are attested in Roman Africa.

<sup>108</sup> On this see also Chapter 9, pp. 201-202.

<sup>109</sup> This could explain the grief of the father of Mania Secunda (quoted on p. 62) who died at the age of two and whose father wanted eternal life for her.



imply that women were prohibited from touching the sacred objects.

One last aspect deserves special mention before dealing with the priesthoods of specific cults, and that is the question of sacred prostitution. Essentially this was a ritual which formed part of the celebration of the death and resurrection of fertility gods, and was particularly well-known among Eastern cults (Lipiński 1995: 486). The source material for this practice in the ancient world is summarized by Krenkel (1988: 1292-1293), who also states that there was a transition from temple prostitution as a form of consecration, to a commercial aspect: earning either a dowry (relieving paternal financial burdens) or a living (through selling sexual favours in temples). Beard and Henderson (1998: 64) distinguish between the defloration of virgins and a rite with temple personnel.<sup>110</sup> It is often difficult to differentiate since our ancient sources themselves are not always clear on the issue. Here a simple distinction will be made along the lines indicated by Beard and North: a ritual single experience for women, and a rite with temple personnel.



FIGURE 12.3 PUNIC PRIESTESS  
3<sup>RD</sup> CENTURY BC

The most common version was that virgins gave themselves to strangers in the temple before their marriage (Lipiński 1995: 487), already mentioned by Herodotus with reference to the 5<sup>th</sup> century BC, where [1.199] Babylonian women had to lie with a stranger at the temple of Aphrodite - Herodotus does not mention that this was before marriage. In another passage [1.93], working class girls in Lydia had to prostitute themselves to earn their dowry until they had sufficient money to marry.

The rite with temple staff involved men and women who were permanently in the service of the deity and through whose actions, in theory, the perpetual fecundity of nature was celebrated (Lipiński 1995: 487).<sup>111</sup> Temple prostitutes have been regarded as a typical aspect of Phoenician origin, particularly in the worship of Astarte. This full-length Punic priestess (Figure 12.3) from a sarcophagus found at the Cemetery of the Rabs, Sainte-Monique Hill, Carthage, may have belonged to such a sacred prostitute.<sup>112</sup> The sarcophagus dates to the 3<sup>rd</sup> century BC, and held the remains of the daughter of Amotmilkart ('servant of Melkart'), Arishutbaal ('object of Baal's desire'), the names evidence of their vocation (Lipiński 1995: 488). To this we can add four inscriptions from Carthage [CIS I, 255, 263, 3776 and 3779] listed by Bonnet (1994: 5), which are either dedicated by or to, women who were 'servants of Astarte' and 'belonging to the congregation

<sup>110</sup> On the defloration of virgins see also p. 52 n.27. It is possible that as in the cultures mentioned there, some special taboos existed which regulated this practice.

<sup>111</sup> Tertullian's comments in the *Apologeticum* [15.7] are really insinuations of misconduct by temple personnel, but since he describes sexual activity as against the interests of the pagan deity, even as a form of desecration, this hardly seems to refer to temple prostitution.

<sup>112</sup> The artwork shows the influence of the Hellenistic style; her hairstyle and the large wings of her dress show Egyptian influence. She is in fact lying on a bird which has her in its wing-grip of protection; she also held a dove in her right hand. The figure is wrongly interpreted by CHARLES-PICARD *ET AL* (1961): *Daily life in Carthage*, 76, as a priestess of Tanit. The coffin contained the bones of 'an aged Negress' (Charles-Picard *et al* 1961: 76), indicating that the coffin had been re-used for the bones of an old negro woman of modern times.



of Astarte'. One inscription [CIS I, 3776] states 'servant of Astarte of Eryx', the important cult centre of Sicily.<sup>113</sup> Here the cult had undergone Hellenization and then Romanization, combining with Aphrodite and Venus. Bonnet (1994: 5-6) believes that a revival of the cult was brought about from Sicily. Her investigation also brought to light an inscription from the Roman period at Carthage mentioning Venus Erycina [CIL 24528], a fusion of Venus and Astarte.

Sacred prostitution was essentially an eastern practice and we have only one instance where it is mentioned in a Roman African context. A famous passage from the account by Valerius Maximus connects the town of Sicca Veneria with carnal rites in honour of the goddess Venus Astarte:

*Siccae enim fanum est Veneris, in quo se matronae conferebant atque inde procedentes ad quaestum, dotes corporis iniuria contrahebant, honesta nimirum tam inhonesto vinculo coniugia iuncturae.*

There is a shrine of Venus at Sicca, where the matrons used to gather and proceed from there to hire themselves out, collecting dowries by mistreating their bodies, meaning to join together a fair marriage, to be sure, through so foul a knot. [Val. Max. 2.6.15]

Many authors have noted<sup>114</sup> that Valerius Maximus, writing in the early 1<sup>st</sup> century AD, is speaking of the past since he uses the imperfect tense, *conferebant*. The use of the past tense may however refer to a more personal context related to his use of the word *matronae* - clearly the women could not have been *matronae* when they performed these actions, since they performed it in order to become *matronae*. The author's meaning is therefore that *matronae*, before they were married, used to hire themselves out, possibly more than once, to collect money for dowries so that they could marry. Augustine does refer to the practice as being in the distant past [*De Civ. Dei* 4.10], recalling that it was to Venus that the Phoenicians consecrated the prostitution of their daughters before they married them off, but Augustine was writing several centuries later, and by the 4<sup>th</sup> century the practice may have died out. It would seem unlikely that women of Roman origin performed this ritual, but there seems to be no reason to suppose that for Punic women this practice was not continued at Sicca Veneria, at least during the period when Valerius Maximus was writing. During the Roman period, temple prostitution in service of Astarte is attested by Strabo, who mentions that soldiers and merchants at Comana squandered their money on such women [12.3.36]. There is also some evidence for the continuation of the practice at Byblos by Lucian of Samosata [*De Syr. Dea* 6], and at Baalbek by Eusebius [*Vita Const.* 3.55.58] as late as the 4<sup>th</sup> century AD, but in both the latter cases the authors are writing in the past tense.<sup>115</sup> Strabo is however speaking of the present, and it seems therefore not entirely unlikely that pockets of this practice continued, also at Sicca Veneria, into the 1<sup>st</sup> century AD. From the Roman period we have epigraphical evidence for male priests and slaves in the service of Venus from the town of Sicca Veneria, although there is no reference to sacred prostitution: *sacerdotes Veneris* [CIL 15879; 15882]; an *actor Veneris* [CIL 15894]; a *servus Veneris* [CIL 15946]; and a *libertus Veneris* [CIL 27580].<sup>116</sup> It is in any case unlikely that they could have been involved in the type of ritual which Valerius Maximus describes, since they would hardly have contributed in the case of women wanting to earn a dowry. It does confirm, however, that the cult was popular in the town of Sicca. Sicca

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<sup>113</sup> The cult of Venus at Eryx is associated by Solinus [27.5] with the cult at Sicca.

<sup>114</sup> Most recently, BEARD AND HENDERSON 'With this body I thee worship: sacred prostitution in antiquity', 56-79.

<sup>115</sup> See also CHARLES-PICARD (1954): *Les religions de l'Afrique antique*, 115-117.

<sup>116</sup> The system of temple slaves, traditionally characteristic of the East, is also known from the temple of Venus at Eryx [Cicero, *In Verr.* 4.32 and 104; *In Caec.* 55-58].



was not Punic in origin but had been settled by the Carthaginians with the Elymaei from Sicily, who worshipped the fertility goddess (Charles-Picard 1954: 156-157). The women mentioned by Valerius Maximus who came to this shrine probably did so because there were no comparable shrines in their own towns, and sacred prostitution seems to have been restricted to a few temples where foreign deities were worshipped. Charles-Picard *et al* (1961: 74) conclude that only immigrant fertility deities were worshipped in such a way, and that this had no precedence in African ritual. The cult therefore seems to have been essentially Eastern in origin, but without precedent in the African or Roman traditions, died out fairly early during the Roman period.

While sacred prostitution may have been essentially Eastern in character, fertility rituals were of course not limited to imported Punic deities. Nicolaus of Damascus [*Frag.* 135 in *FGH*] also describes a fertility festival celebrated by some Libyan tribes which ended with promiscuous sexual intercourse with the purpose of ensuring good crops and harvests (Bates 1970: 179).<sup>117</sup> Iconography in one case also seems suggestive, though difficult to interpret. Charles-Picard (1954: 188) discusses the *cippus* of Quarta from Gales [*CIL* 23834; *ILT* 634], a *sacerdos magna*. The inscription on the base is bilingual, in Punic and Latin. The priestess herself (or possibly the goddess of the cult) is featured on another side of the base, dressed in the belted tunic of the priestess with her hair in two braids (in the fashion seen in Figure 7.23), and carrying a basket on her head. In either hand she holds an ear of wheat. The priestess/goddess figure is associated with Ceres, and Quarta was clearly a high priestess in her cult (Drine 1994: 175-176). Below the inscription there is a banqueting scene, which Charles-Picard describes as 'orgiaque' and reminiscent of the Dionysiac/Bacchic rites. Two persons are depicted, reclining with a small table between them. One of the figures is barely discernible apart from the fact that it is male. The other is better preserved, a woman dressed only in a brassier and a pair of ear-rings. This banquet scene is probably, as Charles-Picard (1954: 188-189) has suggested, connected with the rites of the Thesmophoria as celebrated at Syracuse, or otherwise at Gales the cult of Ceres may have been mixed with local fertility rites which included 'fêtes licencieuses'. Pflaum (1970b: 85) dates the text to the late 1<sup>st</sup> or early 2<sup>nd</sup> century, a time when Gales was still strongly Punic and administered by *suffetes*, like most of the towns in the region. A combination of these two suggestions seems to be the most likely solution, where the originally Greek rites were related to Afro-Punic cult. Since both the Thesmophoria [Diod. Sic. 5.4-6] and the Greek cult of Ceres rigorously excluded men, the local influence seems indicated, since the second figure is male.

## **SPECIFIC ROMAN AFRICAN CULTS AND THEIR PRIESTESSES**

### **I. BA'AL HAMMON - SATURN - AMMON**

The cult of Saturn was the most important regional cult in Roman Africa. It had its roots in African fertility worship of Deus Fatidicus, the Libyan sky god, which also came under Egyptian influence and is the reason why this deity was



FIGURE 12.4 BA'AL HAMMON

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<sup>117</sup> Comment by BATES (1970): *The Eastern Libyans*, 179, that if these unions were permanent they would constitute 'a primitive form of marriage'.



also sometimes referred to as Ammon (Bates 1970: 189-201). In the Punic period it fused with the worship of Ba'al Hammon. Numerous terracotta statues such as that illustrated in Figure 12.4, dated to the late 1<sup>st</sup> century AD, are evidence of the popularity of this Punic element of the cult well into the Roman period (Lipiński 1992: 397). The use of Punic in the inscriptions honouring such pre-Roman deities was gradually replaced by the use of Latin, and in many locations, particularly in Africa Proconsularis, the cult adopted other Roman characteristics in its organization as a public cult. Elsewhere, however, it remained essentially oriental in that its priests were ordained for life and served with total commitment rather than as a quasi-political part time clergy (Lipiński 1992: 397). Its greatest strength, as Le Glay (1966: 404-406) points out, lay in its personal and popular appeal, indicated by the vast number of private dedications, of which over 1800 have been found.<sup>118</sup> It is in this guise, rather than as a public cult, that it managed to survive into and beyond the Christian era. The votive stele in Figure 12.6 is for example dated to the 3<sup>rd</sup> century AD

(Lipiński 1992: 455). In Madauros, where Saturn was the most important deity, Augustine informs us that it predominated there in his time [*De Civ. Dei* 4.10],<sup>119</sup> and according to Procopius, Ammon was still worshipped in Tripolitania up to the reign of Justinian. In connection with the worship of Ammon and Alexander the Great, Procopius mentions that:

ἦν δὲ καὶ ὄμιλος αὐτοῖς τῶν ἱεροδούλων καλουμένων πολὺς.  
In this place there was a great throng of those called temple-slaves.

[*De Aedif.* 6.2.18]

Still later records refer to Ba'al Hammon-Jupiter who was still worshipped by the people of the Fezzān in the 10<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>120</sup>

Worshippers of the African Saturn were overwhelmingly of non-Roman origin, and while several individuals of local élites are attested, the majority were of humble status (Le Glay 1966: 26-31). As dedicators male-female pairs are well attested in the iconography of Saturn.<sup>121</sup> In a typical example in a private dedication in Figure 12.5, the couple are holding a small statue of the god, while the usual animal of sacrifice in this cult, the bull, features in the lower panel (Romanelli 1981: 268). In other cases priestly titles, for example given at Simitthus [*CIL* 14610],



FIGURE 12.5 VOTIVE STELE TO SATURN



FIGURE 12.6 VOTIVE STELE TO SATURN

<sup>118</sup> Of this total 15 000 have been catalogued by LE GLAY (1966): *Saturne africain: histoire*. A certain African inclination to monotheism can be detected in the dominance of the worship of Ba'al-Saturn (Ferguson 1969: 186).

<sup>119</sup> Evidence for the ritual sacrifice of animals in the worship of Romano-Punic gods in the rural areas of Roman Africa is still found as late as the 4<sup>th</sup> century (Ben Abed Ben Khader *et al* 1987: 49).

<sup>120</sup> The Yemenite author al-Hamdānī mentions in his *Kitāb Sifat al-Jazīra* that the Berbers of this region revered Jupiter: 'They adore and exalt him. They bow down before him and the name him Amon [Ammūn]'. Text quoted by NORRIS (1982): *The Berbers in Arabic literature*, 7. BATES (1970): *The Eastern Libyans*, 187 *passim*; 203, also comments on the survival of pagan religions among the Berbers in the Christian era.

<sup>121</sup> A variety of such *stelae* are illustrated and described in ROMANELLI (1981): 'Le provincie Africane e Roma'.



and the number of forum temples in Africa Proconsularis indicate that we are dealing with a public cult. The cult was served by a number of priests or *sacerdotes*, but this priestly title is never given to women, at least not in inscriptions (Lipiński 1995: 458). At the same time, in sculptural reliefs the women wear the garments commonly associated with priestesses, are portrayed offering sacrifices, and also feature as *canistrariae* or basket-carriers, as already illustrated by the Boglio stele.<sup>122</sup> The African roots of the cult of Deus Fatidicus also indicate some female involvement: in one of its ritual processions married women and virgins played a role, singing uncouth hymns in the Libyan tongue [Curtius 4.7.23 *passim*; Strabo 17.3.9; Diod. Sic. 17.50]. At the other end of the time frame under discussion, it is also a priestess of Ammon who is described by Corippus in the *Iohannis* in such heathen and barbaric terms [3.61 *passim*; 6.145-176].<sup>123</sup> There is one inscription from Carthage [CIL 24519 = ILS 4427] in which, under the title of *Iovi Hammoni Barbaro Silvano sacerdotes* ('priests of Jupiter Hammon and of the African god Silvanus'), two women are referred to. Sempronia Salsula, *mater sacr(or)um*, heads a list of priests numbering at least thirteen (the text is slightly damaged), who are called collectively the *sace(r)dotes dei barbari silvani*. The name of Valeria Paulina, also *mater sacroru(m)*, has been appended in a different hand together with the name of a *sacerdos*, Q. Liberius Proculus. It is possible that Jupiter-Hammon-Silvanus was a syncretic deity. Again Afro-Punic precedents may provide a clue here, since a woman is also mentioned as the head of a college of male priests in a Libyco-Punic inscription predating the Roman period (Berger 1907, 188 *passim*; Le Glay 1966: 16-17). From the 1<sup>st</sup> century AD at Tupsuctu another woman, Fabia Audicaena [CIL 20650], is also called *mater sacrorum*, although no cult is mentioned. The inscription is erected by her daughter, Fulvia Melissa, and it is unlikely that this is an official cult. It is possible that Fabia, too, served in the cult of Saturn. The reason for not declaring the name of a deity has been suggested by Drine (1994: 180), who maintains that this may be due to Punic influence, since in Semitic tradition it was customary not to pronounce the name of the god. She points to the evidence given by Augustine that devotees of Saturn did not call their god by this name, but referred to him as 'the old one' (*senex*).<sup>124</sup> Male priests of Saturn are usually styled simply as '*sacerdos*', without the mention of Saturn, and the cult is more often identified by other indicators, thus confirming Drine's evidence. In conclusion, therefore, there is no reason to doubt that women could serve as priestesses in the cult, although no official priesthoods for women are in evidence, and consequently no instances of *liberalitas* by these women.

## II. TANIT

Another major syncretic deity worshipped in North Africa was an Afro-Punic combination of Tanit and Astarte, a chthonic deity which also combined with the worship of Juno as Juno Caelestis (Bonnet 1994: 3-4). It is for the latter reason that she is mentioned briefly here, since there is no certain evidence for female priesthoods in the cult of Tanit. Libyan religion was similar to that of



FIGURE 12.7 SIGN OF TANIT, 1<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY BC TO 1<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY AD

<sup>122</sup> See LE GLAY (1966): *Saturne africain*, 375.

<sup>123</sup> See above p. 273.

<sup>124</sup> In addition this custom was not entirely foreign to the Romans, since Plutarch [*Quaest. Rom.* 61] mentions that some Romans believed that it brought bad luck to hail a deity by its name.



the Egyptians in that they had a preference for zoomorphic deities (Law 1978: 145; Decret and Fantar 1981: 253-257), and the goddess Tanit is occasionally portrayed with a lioness' head (Bullo and Rossignoli 1998: 252-253). More commonly seen, however, are the Phoenician antecedents in the use of symbols, the circle-and-triangle sign of Tanit (Figure 12.7).<sup>125</sup> During the 1<sup>st</sup> century AD a priestess, 'Adiyat, is mentioned on a stele with a Neo-Punic inscription, which briefly notes the age at which she died (77) and that she was the leader of the singers for 18 years.<sup>126</sup> She is likely to have been a priestess of Tanit/Astarte or of Saturn (Février (1955: 63-64). The singers, usually a lower order, were unlikely to have had the status of priestesses.

### III. JUNO CAELESTIS

Juno Caelestis was a Romanized Afro-Punic deity and hence a goddess with many faces. Dedications to 'Juno' can be said to represent the Roman part of the deity, the goddess of the Capitol associated with Jupiter and Minerva:

MDAOUROUCH (MADAUROS)

[ILALGI, 2146]<sup>127</sup>

... FL(AMEN)<sup>128</sup> AEDIL(IS) (DUUM)VIR | AT FILICINIA | SECURA SA| CERDOTES | KAPITOLI FI| LIO PONTI| FICI.  
LOCUS | D(ATUS) D(ECRETO) D(ECURIONUM).

...flamen, aedile, duumvir and Filicinia Secura, priests of the Capitol (have erected this) to their son, pontifex.

The location was given by decurial decree.

The decree of the site by the local *ordo* indicates that this husband and wife were priests in an official cult at Madauros. Three priestesses of the African Juno are known, all from Numidia: in two instances we have a *sacerdos Iunonis* from Cirta: Baebia Casta [CIL 7093 = ILAlg II 805] and Iulia Postuma [CIL 7109 = ILAlg II, 808]. In the case of Baebia Casta her father, Festus, was probably the municipal priest of the related cult of Caelestis [ILAlg II, 804], and this was certainly one of the city's official cults. The epitaph dedicated to Iulia Postuma is a simple attestation of her priesthood and age at death, 51. A third priestess of Juno, Iulia Veneria [CIL 17784], has erected the inscription *votum solverunt* ('they have fulfilled their vow') together with her husband, Q. Minucius Saturninus, who was also a priest, although his cult is not mentioned.<sup>129</sup>

But on the whole, in Africa the goddess was more often known as Juno Caelestis or simply Caelestis, described in Apuleius' novel as the 'virgin who travels through the sky on the back of a lion' (*virginem vectura leonis caelo ... percolit*) [Metam. 6.4].<sup>130</sup> Augustine in his pagan days delighted in the festivals held in honour of Caelestis and Cybele, and his association of the two deities indicates some similarities in the way they were worshipped in Africa [De Civ. Dei 2.4].<sup>131</sup> But we learn little from him beyond the fact that the cult held

<sup>125</sup> Twelve tombstones from La Ghorfa (south of Dougga) dating from the Roman period show an interesting syncretism between Libyan, Punic and Roman religious iconography, for example signs of Tanit combined with Roman divinities and the Punic *caduceus* flanking the dedicant's niche. For discussion see BISI (1978): 'A proposito di alcune *stele* del tipo della Ghorfa al British Museum'; on cultural assimilation see MOORE (1999): 'Cultural elasticity in the inscriptions of the so-called La Ghorfa stela'.

<sup>126</sup> The original neo-Punic and transcribed text is given in FÉVRIER (1964-65b): 'A propos de l'épigraph néopunique d'une prêtresse', with discussion of the problematic interpretation of MN'BT, 'having grown', to MT'BT, 'died'.

<sup>127</sup> In the commentary Gsell notes that mention of priests of the Capitoline triad is rare in Africa.

<sup>128</sup> He was probably *flamen curialis* (Bassignano 1974: 284 n. 34).

<sup>129</sup> Q. Minucius Saturninus is also mentioned in CIL 2229 (Musculula) and linked to the Mithraic cult.

<sup>130</sup> The importance of the cult of Caelestis in Africa is discussed by CHARLES-PICARD (1954): *Les religions de l'Afrique antique*, 105-114; LE GLAY (1966): *Saturne africain: histoire*, 215-222; BÉNABOU (1976a): *La résistance africaine à la romanisation*, 362-369.

<sup>131</sup> PAVIS D'ESCURAC (1976): 'La Magna Mater en Afrique', 228-233, notes that the text does not say that the two deities were one and the same.



processions and performances in honour of the goddess in which a *ferculum* or litter was used, presumably to convey her image,<sup>132</sup> followed by the *sacrati* or devotees, and that there were bawdy theatrical performances (*ludi scaenici* were often presented in a cultic context).<sup>133</sup> A number of Punic elements are discernible in the cult. One of its temples is described by Quodvultdeus [*Lib. de Prom.* 3.44] in the 5<sup>th</sup> century as a walled courtyard with a group of sanctuaries on one of the sides, a typically Punic style.<sup>134</sup> Hierarchical organization, another eastern characteristic, is also indicated in its priesthood: one inscription mentions *canistrariae* [*ILS* 9294], and another reports a *maior canistraria* [*CIL* 12919]. At Thugga, however, the temple of Caelestis was one of the town's largest public buildings, and in the Roman style. It seems likely, therefore, as Rives (1995: 166) suggests, that in cases like this the *ordo* re-established the cult of the traditional Punic deity in the Roman tradition.

Two inscriptions specifically mentioned priestesses of Caelestis:

CHEMTOU (SIMITTHUS)

[*CIL* 25648]

VERTURIA SEX(TI) F(ILIA) | MARTHA | SACERDA CAELESTAE | HIC SITA V(IXIT) A(NNIS) XCV

Verturia Martha, daughter of Sextus, priestess of Caelestis, lies here. She lived 95 years.

In the other example, this time from Hadrumetum, Porcia Veneria erects an epitaph for her husband, Publius Rutilius Maximus, and signs herself as a priestess of Caelestis [*CIL* 22920; *ILS* 4472]. P. Rutilius Maximus was a priest of Pluto, and it would thus appear that husband and wife were both priests, but for different cults.<sup>135</sup> In a third case, Modia Victoria was a *sacerdos* at Thubursicum Bure, and makes a dedication to Juno Caelestis - it is likely that she was therefore a priestess in this cult [*CIL* 1424]. In none of these cases does it appear that these were priestesses in official cults.

The cult of Juno Caelestis was very popular among female worshippers - Juno was traditionally the goddess of childbirth. Even during the period of Christian supremacy, Salvian notes with condemnation the still active devotion to this goddess - even Christian women worshipped her before coming to Church [*De Gub. Dei* 8.9-14]. The small number of inscriptions of priestesses of Juno Caelestis mentioned above, however, confirm that this was a cult in which male priests dominated, even though it had a large number of female followers.<sup>136</sup>

#### IV. CYBELE - MAGNA MATER

The cult of Cybele or the Magna Mater is well attested in Africa,<sup>137</sup> although according to the tables of MacMullen (1981: 6) epigraphically not as well attested as for example in the Italian cities (excluding Rome and Ostia) or as in Germany and Gaul. At Carthage the cult probably included the festival in honour of Attis, since an inscription [*CIL* 12570] and the *Codex Theodosianus* [16.10.20, AD 415] mention a college of the

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<sup>132</sup> The statue of Caelestis, according to Herodian [5.6.4], was held in inordinate esteem throughout the African provinces, and according to local tradition, was originally erected by Dido.

<sup>133</sup> See above p. 204.

<sup>134</sup> This description can be compared with that given by LE GLAY (1966): *Saturne africain: histoire*, 275-279, for the temple of Saturn at Thugga, a style derived from a Punic tradition.

<sup>135</sup> On the cult of Pluto, see BESCHAOUCH (1969/70): 'Pluton africain'.

<sup>136</sup> Male priests of Cybele are attested in the *CIL* in 8 certain cases, one of them a *sacerdos publicus deae Caelestis* at La Ghorfa during the reign of Commodus.

<sup>137</sup> Most of the epigraphical and iconographical evidence for the cult has been collected in VERMASEREN (1986): *Corpus cultus Cybelae Attidisque*, 17-55.



*dendrophori*. The city also had its own *archigallus*, and the cult of the Magna Mater is likely to have been an official cult here (Rives 1995: 74-75).<sup>138</sup> Her temple was situated on the east side of the Byrsa. Generally across the Empire women are not often featured as priestesses in this cult, but two examples have been found in the African provinces. It is also only in Africa that we have an example of a married woman as a priestess, since they were usually young girls (Obbink 1965: 31-32), and it is possible that the cult was influenced by that of Caelestis in this respect.<sup>139</sup> At Utica in the 2<sup>nd</sup> century, Pompeia Satria Fortunata was the wife of the priest of the cult, C. Raecius Aprilis.<sup>140</sup> Both she and her husband are described in an inscription on the front of an altar [Vermaseren 1986, 41] as intermediaries between the Great Mother and the *dendrophori* (... *tradente C. Raecio Aprile | et Pompeia Satria Fortunata eius sacer|dotibus...*), and she was clearly a member of the priesthood together with her husband. Our other example is from Diana Veteranorum in Numidia:

ZANA (DIANA VETERANORUM) [AE 1931, 63]  
M(ATRI) D(EUM) M(AGNAE) I(DEAE) A(UGUSTAE) S(ACRUM) | PRO SALUT| [E -----] HORTE [N]SIA  
FORTUNATA SACERD[OS] | TAURIBOLIUM ET CRIOBO[L] | IUM] MOTUM SANCIT MANDA | [N]TE M(ARCO) TULLIO  
PUDENTE P[A] | TRE  
Consecrated to the Great Mother of the Gods of Mount Ida. For the health of the emperor ..... Hortensia Fortunata, priestess, has undertaken to offer this sacrifice of the *taurobolium* and the *criobolium*;<sup>141</sup> on the order of Marcus Tullius Pudens, grand master of the sacrifices.<sup>142</sup>

There are a number of theories as to what exactly sacrifices in the cult entailed. Based on a 4<sup>th</sup> century text by Prudentius [*Peristeph.* 1010], it seems that the sacrifice of the bull or ram was done over a pit so that the blood could flow over the high priest below. This description has not found much favour for the Romanized cult, and is explained as a late (3<sup>rd</sup> or 4<sup>th</sup> century) development (Obbink 1965: 37). The *taurobolium* at Mactaris was performed on the instructions of the *ordo* [ILS 4142], and was presumably a public cult there, as at Carthage. It is unlikely that this rite would have been performed in a public cult. The other explanation appears more favourable. The genitalia of the sacrificed animal were carried in a dish (*kernos*) and offered to the goddess. This ritual could also be performed by women (Schillinger 1979: 366), and this seems to be a more likely course of action for our priestess and the phrase *motum sancit*. The genitalia were then buried and an altar built over them, which explains the number of altars for the cult found in Roman Africa.<sup>143</sup> In both this case and the one cited above, female priestesses are clearly subject to the authority of the male priest. In Tertullian's *Apologeticum* we are told:

... cum Marco Aurelio apud Sirmium republicae exempto die sexto decimo Kalendarum Aprilium archigallus ille sanctissimus die nono Kalendarum earundem, quo sanguinem impurum lacertos quoque castrando libabat, pro salute imperatoris Marci iam intercepti solita aeque imperia mandavit.

The State lost Marcus Aurelius by death at Sirmium on the 17<sup>th</sup> of March; but on the 24<sup>th</sup> his holiness the arch-eunuch, offering his own unclean blood and slashing his muscles, issued the usual orders to pray for the safety of Marcus, who was already dead. [25.5]

<sup>138</sup> Due to Roman influence the *archigallus* of the cult was no longer a eunuch (Schillinger 1979: 30)..

<sup>139</sup> PAVIS D'ESCURAC (1976): 'La Magna Mater en Afrique', 242, notes, for example, that the imagery of the Magna Mater in Africa was very similar to that of Caelestis.

<sup>140</sup> The inscription is discussed by LE GALL (1958): 'Inscription criobolique découverte à Utique'.

<sup>141</sup> *Taurobolium* and *criobolium* literally mean the catching of the animal (bull or ram) and bringing it to sacrifice.

<sup>142</sup> The inscription is dated to the 3<sup>rd</sup> century and the emperor whose name has been erased could be either Elagabalus (218-222) or Probus (276-282) (Ladjimi-Sebaï 1977: 125). Two other inscriptions referring to *taurobolia* mention Severus and his sons [ILA 355] and Gallienus [ILA 356] (Rives 1995: 74).

<sup>143</sup> VERMASEREN (1986): *Corpus cultus Cybelae Attitdisque. V. Aegyptus, Africa, Hispania, Gallia et Britannia*, gives examples of 17 such altars in the African provinces.



Orders therefore came from the high priest, and it appears that at least some of these were carried out by priestesses. There is some evidence for *liberalitas* in this cult in the African provinces, but only one tentative private dedication by a woman: *Licinia E[x]tricata sua pecunia* [CIL 19125] on a plaque found at Sigus.

## V. BELLONA - VIRTUS

The cult of Bellona was also served by male priests (MacMullen 1981: 100), but again we have one exception.<sup>144</sup>

CHERCEL (CAESAREA)

[AE 1902, 12]

DEAE BELLONAE | SCANTIA C(AI) F(ILIA) PEREGRINA SA | CERDOS EX DECRETO ORDINIS AREA AD | SIGNATA  
AEDEM A FUNDAMENTIS | D(E) S(UA) P(ECUNIA) F(ECIT)

To the goddess Bellona. Scantia Peregrina, daughter of Gaius, priestess, given the site by decurial decree, erected the entire temple at her own cost.

Scantia Peregrina is the sole priestess of this cult for whom we have evidence. She was important enough to donate a temple to Caesarea for which the site was declared by the *ordo* - clearly this was a public cult in the city and this was likely to be no small shrine.

In a related inscription, this time from Madauros [ILAlg I, 2071], women played a smaller role. Here the deity is Virtus, who is often equated with Bellona (Lloyd-Morgan 1999: 125), and as such an official cult given to a goddess who was the *conservatrix populi Romani*. The inscription gives the names of men and women in two columns, thirteen men (all *cistiferi*, three specified as *sacerdos*, one as *flamen perpetuus*) and four women (all *canistrariae*). The hierarchical organization of the cult of Bellona/Virtus was identical to that of Caelestis. In the cult of Virtus the Eastern influence is ascribed to the influence of the Cappadocian goddess Mâ (Charles-Picard 1954: 224). It is possibly this cult to which Augustine refers in his description of the public celebrations at Madauros which involved the magistrates of the city [Ep. 17.4].

## VI. THE CERERES - CERES - TELLUS

This earth or fertility goddess went by a number of names in Africa. Scholars are still debating as to whether inscriptions mentioning the cult of Ceres are referring to the pre-Roman Graeco-Punic cult of the Cereres,<sup>145</sup> or the Roman cult of Ceres, but essentially the two shared many features and both had connections to the mystery cult at Eleusis. The African connection with the worship of the Greek Demeter and Kore is mentioned by Diodorus [14.77.4-5], who relates that in the 4<sup>th</sup> century BC, when the Carthaginians were besieging Syracuse, they pillaged the temple of the goddesses. As a result their army was struck by a plague and suffered a series of defeats. To propitiate the goddesses, they brought their cult back to Carthage where it was celebrated according to the Greek rites. Diodorus' tale is to some extent corroborated by the evidence of Demeter-worship in Punic Africa in the form of terracottas of the goddess with a pig, in the Greek cult the offering of choice, but an unclean animal in the Phoenician tradition. In the early 4<sup>th</sup> century the worship of Ceres, together with Isis and the Magna Mater, are still mentioned by Arnobius of Sicca as cults which were foreign but accepted [Adv. Nat. 2.73].<sup>146</sup>

<sup>144</sup> Tertullian [Apologet. 9.10] also mentions only men dedicated to the cult of Bellona in Carthage. Two male priests have been recorded from Rusicade [CIL 5708] and Sigus [CIL 7957].

<sup>145</sup> Cereres (plural) probably Ceres and Proserpina (RE: 'Ceres', 1074). Tellus is equated with Demeter/Ceres.

<sup>146</sup> The same text also refers to the *sacrum anniversarium Cereris* which is interpreted in the commentary by MCCracken (1949): *The case against the pagans*, 346 n. 461, as entirely Greek in character, introduced shortly before the Hannibalic war and celebrated in



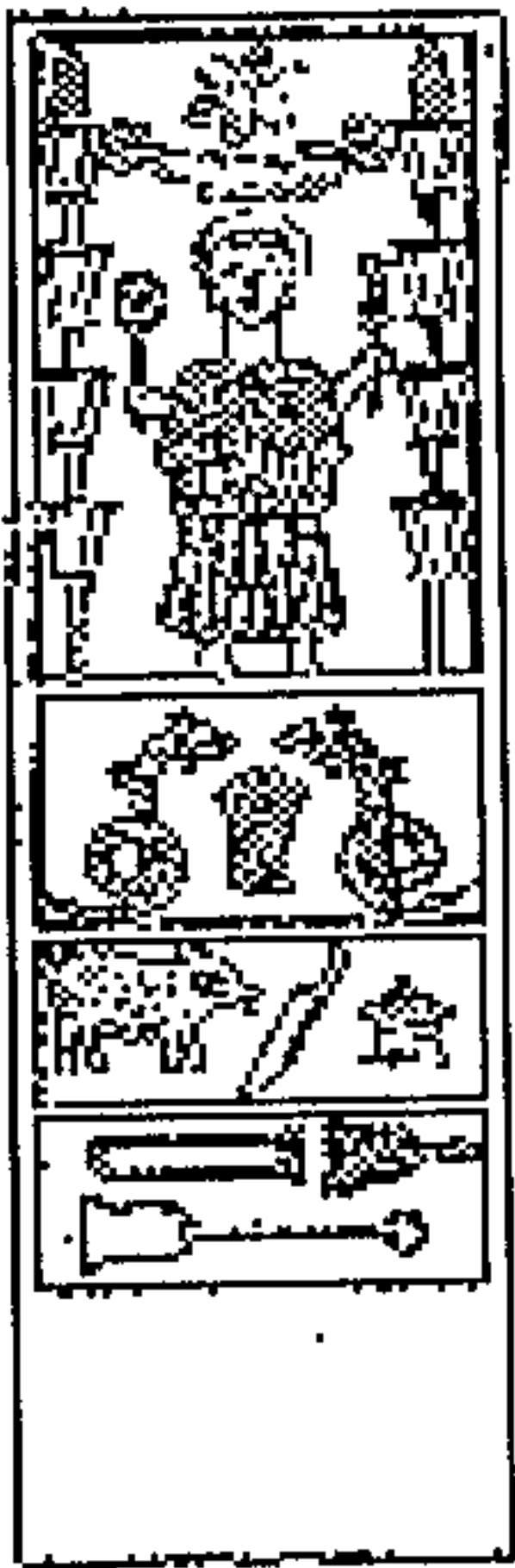


FIGURE 12.8 DRAWING OF A STELE: PRIESTESS OF THE CERERES

Pagan women's connection to the afterlife was often through the worship of female fertility deities like Demeter and Kore, or the Cereres. Women felt a special connection to the goddesses, particularly those who had lost children, since, according to legend, Demeter had gone to the Underworld for her own daughter. Women's portraits were often identified with Demeter or Ceres by such attributes as poppies, wheat, or pomegranates (Nixon 85-88),<sup>147</sup> to express hope for their life after death and to honour or heroize them while still alive (Wood 2000: 79). We see this for example in Figure 7.9, an elderly *matrona* holding poppies in her hand. This is usually distinguishable from the number of reliefs which show the goddesses and her priestesses in Roman Africa. The dedication to Iulia Rufina [ILT 1563] is accompanied by a relief of a priestess, belted in the fashion commented on by Tertullian [De Pallio 4] as being the prerogative of priestesses of Ceres, and wearing the *galerus* or cap also mentioned in the same text.<sup>148</sup> The illustrations of the priestess of Ceres such as in Figure 12.8, show the attributes of the cult: the priestess hold a caduceus, an indication of the office of the *hierokeryx* or herald; and an ear of corn, which the devotee offered to the goddess. She is surrounded by images of the afterlife: ears of corn at the side, a garland and a star, and the basket of fruit in the second panel symbolize the life of peace she will know in the hereafter. The serpents and the sacrificial pig are the chthonic elements connected to the Eleusinian mysteries, as well as the *cista* or basket which contained the sacred objects. The spade and tongs are typically Punic and occur frequently in reliefs of African mystery cults (Charles-Picard 1954: 187), possibly for burial and retrieval of sacred objects. The images of the Cereres and Juno found on the *stele* of Aelia Leporina mentioned above are similar to those of another *cippus* found near Thala, where three sides are sculpted.<sup>149</sup> One face bears the inscription below the portrait of the deceased, Flavia Tertulla, daughter of Marcus, who lived 100 years [ILA 199], while the other two sides are portraits of Ceres and Proserpina respectively, bearing baskets on their heads. Similarly on a *cippus* found at Hr Jenoun, the epitaph for Helvia Severa [CIL 591; ILT 504] is accompanied by an image of a woman sacrificing while another woman with a basket on her head approaches from the right. These actions could make them priestesses of either Ceres or Saturn (see Boglio stele), since the inscription does not identify a deity.



FIGURE 12.9 CIPPUS OF PRIESTESS OF CERES FROM GALES

August.

<sup>147</sup> According to WOOD (2000): 'Mortals, empresses and earth goddesses', 83: 'The Large Herculaneum woman was, however, undoubtedly understood by Roman patrons to represent Demeter, since statues of this type, including portrait statues, frequently hold her attributes of the corn ears and poppies.' Wood cites several such examples of provincial elite women, some the wives of politically active husbands, but there appears to be no connection to any function as a priestess of Ceres.

<sup>148</sup> See also the comments on the turban and its religious connotations, pp. 154-155.

<sup>149</sup> For the remarks on the stele of Aelia Leporina, see p. 275.



TABLE II. PRIESTESSES OF CERES/CERERES/ TELLUS

NR <sup>150</sup>	REF	PLACE	NAME	STATUS	FAMILY	AGE	EPITHETS	CONTEXT
i	ILA 199	Aïn Maja	Flavia Tertulla	<i>sacerdos</i>	daughter of Marcus	100	none	epitaph
ii	CIL 11547 = 361	Ammaedara <sup>151</sup>	Cornelia Licinia	<i>s(acerdos) C(ererum) or C(ereris) P(ublica) or p(ia)</i>	children erect base	65	<i>p(ia) ?</i>	epitaph
iii	BCTH 1934/3 5, 258-9	Ascours	Biricbal Iurat	<i>Caereris sacerda</i>	none mentioned	58	none	epitaph
iv (13)	CIL 14472 = 10580	Bulla Regia	Valeria Concessa	<i>sacerdos publica Cererum</i>	daughter of Lucius; sons erect statue base	none given	<i>matri optimae</i>	epitaph
v	CIL 112	Capsa	Vindicia Theodora	<i>sacerdos Cereris</i>	Antonius Pudens, son	80	none	epitaph
vi	CIL 1140	Carthage	Sallustia Luperca	<i>sacerdos C[ereris or ererum]</i>	daughter of Marcus	none given	none	dedication by priestess
vii	CIL 6708; ILAlg II 3617	Castellum Tidditanorum	Rupilia Marcella	<i>sacerdos Cereris</i>	daughter of Lucius	not given	none	possibly funerary
viii	ILAlg II, 3616	Castellum Tidditanorum	Cluventia Novella	<i>sacerdos Cereris or Cererum</i>	none mentioned	[.....]	[.....]	?
ix	CIL 12335; ILS 4465 ILT 649	Gens Bacchiana	Aemilia Amot Micar	<i>sacerdos Cererum</i>	none mentioned	75; consecrated 25 years 10 days <sup>152</sup>	<i>pia</i>	epitaph
x	CIL 26237	between Gillium and Uchi Maius	Iulia Prima	<i>sacerdos Telluris</i>	children and grandchildren	95	<i>pia; santissime</i>	epitaph
xi	ILAlg I, 929	Hammam Zaid	Hammonia	<i>sacerdos Cererum</i>	daughter of Beregal; M. Montius, her son	none given	none	epitaph
xii	CIL 591; ILT 504	Hr Jenoun	Helvia Severa	<i>sacerdos</i>	L. Fabricius Gemellus, son	85	<i>castissima; vixit iudicio, senuit merito; hic pietatis honos veteris</i>	epitaph

<sup>150</sup> Numbers in brackets refer to the numbers in Appendix A.

<sup>151</sup> Ceres was probably a public cult at Ammaedara, since Cornelia Licinia is styled *sacerdos Cereris/Cererum publica*, 'public priestess of Ceres/the Cereres'.

<sup>152</sup> Aemilia Amotmicar therefore entered the priesthood at age 50.



*"Fantasies of Nobility and Heraldic Art"*

xiii	<i>CIL</i> 3303	Lambaesis	Clementilla	<i>sacerdos</i> <i>Cererum</i>	daughter of Publius, sister of Lucius Munatius Lactus	none given	none	C. erects epitaph for brother
xiv	<i>AE</i> 1951, 55	Mactaris	Nonnia Primitiva	<i>sacer[dos]</i> <i>Cererum</i> <i>Punicarum</i>	none mentioned	97	<i>pia</i>	epitaph
xv	<i>CIL</i> 11826	Mactaris	Numisia [Maxi]ma	<i>sacerdos</i> <i>Cererum</i>	none mentioned	90	<i>pia</i>	epitaph
xvi	<i>ILAlg</i> I, 2213	Madauros	Bassilia Primosa Marisa	<i>sacerdos</i> <i>Telluris</i>	none mentioned	70	none	epitaph
xvii	<i>ILAlg</i> I, 2214	Madauros	Caelia Sperata	<i>sacerdos</i> <i>Telluris</i>	daughter of Caelus Felix	75	<i>pia</i>	epitaph
xviii	<i>ILAlg</i> I, 2227	Madauros	Iulia Katullina	<i>sacerdos</i> <i>Telluris</i>	none mentioned	90	<i>pia</i>	epitaph
xix	<i>ILAlg</i> I, 2219	Madauros	Datia Fortunata	<i>sacerdos</i> <i>Cererum</i>	none mentioned	85	<i>pia</i>	epitaph
xx	<i>ILAlg</i> I, 2231	Madauros	[...]	<i>s[acerd(os)]</i> <i>[magna</i> <i>Cereru]m</i>	T. Flavius Maurinus, her son	65	<i>pia</i>	epitaph
xxi	<i>CIL</i> 15780	Masculula	[...]	<i>sacerdos</i> <i>C[eris or</i> <i>ererum]</i>	Husband, son and daughter mentioned	65	<i>pia</i>	epitaph
xxii	<i>CIL</i> 19993	Milev	Valeria Pupa	<i>sacerdos</i> <i>C[eris or</i> <i>ererum]</i>	daughter of Lucius	82	none	epitaph
xxiii	<i>CIL</i> 20686	Saldae	Herennia Tertulla	<i>sacerdos</i> <i>Ceris</i>	daughter of Marcus	?	none	epitaph
xxiv	<i>CIL</i> 11732 = 580	Saltus Massipianus	Valeria Fortunata	<i>sacerdos</i> <i>Cererum</i>	Veturia Secunda, her daughter	72	none	epitaph
xxv (65)	<i>CIL</i> 1623	Sicca Veneria	Valeria Saturnina (priestess) & Valeria Maior ( <i>flaminica</i> )	Consecrated to Ceres Augusta; <i>sacerdos</i>	none mentioned	none given	none	dedication
xxvi	<i>ILT</i> 1563	Sidi bou Beker	Iulia Rufina	<i>sacerdos</i>	wife of Rufinus	57	<i>sancta,</i> <i>pudica,</i> <i>castissima</i> <i>matronarum</i>	epitaph
xxvii	<i>ILA</i> 38	Hr Thina	Iulia Rufina	<i>sacerdos</i>	none mentioned	87	none	epitaph
xxviii	<i>ILAlg</i> I, 1373	Thubursicu Numidarum	Matrona	<i>sacerdos</i> <i>Telluris</i>	daughter of Pulcher	83	<i>pia</i>	epitaph
xxix	<i>ILAlg</i> I, 1374	Thubursicu Numidarum	Rufina	<i>sacerdos</i> <i>Telluris</i>	daughter of Rufinus, son of Crassus	85	<i>pia</i>	epitaph



TABLE IIIA. HIGH PRIESTESSES OF CERES / THE CERERES

NR	REF.	PLACE	NAME	STATUS	FAMILY	AGE	EPITHETS	CONTEXT
i	<i>CIL</i> 20203 = 8352; <i>ILAlg</i> II 4181	Ben Bassam	Aria Anulla	<i>sacerdos magna</i>	none	101	<i>bona sacerdos</i>	epitaph
ii	<i>CIL</i> 23208; <i>ILS</i> 4466	Cillium	[...]	<i>sacerdoti magnae Cererum</i>	<i>filius eius</i>	none given	<i>castissime; carissime</i>	epitaph
iii	<i>CIL</i> 23834	Gales	Quarta	<i>sacerdos magna</i>	daughter of Nyptan, wife of Celer	59	none	epitaph
iv	<i>CIL</i> 3307	Lambaesis	Sallustia Victoria	<i>sacerda magna</i>	Iulius Faustinus & Iulia Donata for their mother	95	none	epitaph
v	<i>ILAlg</i> I, 2218	Madauros	Claudia Paula	<i>sacerdos magna</i>	none mentioned	90	<i>pia vixit</i>	epitaph
vi	<i>CIL</i> 6359; <i>ILS</i> 4468	Mastar	Iulia Credula	<i>sacerdos Cererum loci primi</i>	shares epitaph with her son also buried there	75	none	epitaph
vii	<i>CIL</i> 5937	Saddar	Firmidia Impetrata	<i>sacerdos magna</i>	<i>filia</i> ?	90	none	epitaph
viii	<i>CIL</i> 27737; <i>ILS</i> 4467	Hr Sidi bou Gossa	Iulia Zaba	<i>sacerda magna</i>	none mentioned	78	none	epitaph
ix	<i>CIL</i> 19136; <i>ILAlg</i> II, 6524	Sigus	Iulia Urbana	<i>sacerdos magna</i>	none	101	none	epitaph
x (73)	<i>CIL</i> 8993; <i>ILS</i> 1200	Taksebt	Fabatia Polla Fabia Domitia Gelliola	<i>lampadifera</i>	daughter of Lucius, wife of consul	none	<i>patrona piissima</i>	honorary
xi	<i>CIL</i> 5149	Thagaste	Claudia Rufina	<i>sacerdos magna</i>	none mentioned	103	<i>pia vixit</i>	epitaph
xii	<i>CIL</i> 505= 11681	Thala	Aelia Namphamina <sup>153</sup>	<i>sacerdos magna</i>	[.....]	100	[.....]	epitaph
xiii	<i>CIL</i> 20650	Tupusuctu	Fabia Audicaena	<i>mater sacrorum</i>	Fulvia Melissa her daughter	65	<i>matri bene merenti</i>	epitaph

### Nature of the priesthood of the Cereres

According to Tertullian, priestesses of the 'African Ceres'<sup>154</sup> were forbidden to consort with men, in fact the reverse of the priests of Melkart who were forbidden to consort with women mentioned above:

<sup>153</sup> The name Namphaminus is Punic, also mentioned by Augustine in his letters [17.2].

<sup>154</sup> According to HEYOB (1975): *The cult of Isis among women in the Greco-Roman world*, 127, it is Isis who is meant by the 'African Ceres', while LIPINSKI (1995): *Dieux et déesses de l'univers phénécien et punique*, 459, links Tertullian's 'African Ceres' to the worship of Saturn. It seems more likely, however, that Tertullian is making a distinction between the Roman Ceres and the 'African' Ceres worshipped in Africa before the Roman arrival, as described by Diodorus above, p. 287.



*feminas vero Cereri Africanae, cui etiam sponte abdicato matrimonio assenescunt, aversantes exinde contactum masculorum usque ad oscula filiorum*

women who, of their own accord, leave their husbands and grow old in the service of the African Ceres, renouncing forever all contact with men, even the kisses of their own sons [De Exhort. Cast. 13.19-21]

Also in his *De Monogamia* [17] he repeats that the marriages of priestesses of Ceres were amicably dissolved and they embraced the widowed state, even though they were not widows. The 'chastity' referred to in inscriptions listed in the tables above for some of these priestesses probably refers to this aspect of the cult, for example Iulia Rufina (Table II.xxvi) is *sancta, pudica, castissima matronarum*, or the commonplace *pia vixit*, which is not particularly attested in connection with other priesthoods in the African context, although it occurs commonly in epitaphs for both men and women. The list of inscriptions in Tables II and IIIA and B (see below) also attests to priestesses who were attached to the cult until a ripe old age, as Tertullian mentions, the average age being 79 years (high priestesses, 77.5 years). Since Aemilia Amot Micar (Table II.ix) had been a priestess for 25 years and died at the age of 75, we may deduce that the age at which women could consecrate themselves to Ceres must have been 50, since there is no evidence for any priestess of Ceres younger than this. Presumably at this age the rigours of this religious obligation would not have been as serious. The requirements of mature age for a priestess of Ceres/ Tellus is usually explained by the associations with the age of the earth in fertility cults (Drine 1994: 178-179). All these elements are peculiar to the African cult and foreign to the Roman cult of Ceres.

A few Punic names in the inscriptions (for example Biricbal Iurat (Table II.iii), Aelia Namphamina (Table IIIA.xii) or Aemilia Amot Micar (Table II.ix) or bilingual inscriptions (for example *CIL* 23834) also support the adoption of the Greek cult in the Punic period. A Punic identity is even specified in the case of Nonnia Primitiva from Mactaris, who is styled a *sacerdos Cererum Punicarum* (Table II.xiv) - even closer to the 'African Ceres' referred to by Tertullian in the excerpt quoted above. Graeco-Punic influence is also evident in the hierarchical structure of the cult, from the ordinary *sacerdos* to the *sacerdos Cererum loci primi* ('priestess of Cereres of the first rank') [*ILS* 4468] and the *sacerdos magna* (see Table IIIA). One woman already mentioned and clearly a person of status to judge by her connections, is described as a *lampadifera* (Table IIIA.x):<sup>155</sup>

TAKSEBT

[*CIL* 8993 = *ILS* 1200]

FABATIAE LUCI | FILIAE POLLAE | FABIAE DOMITIAE GELLIOLAE CONSULARI(S) FE | MINAE LAMPADIFERAE |  
M(ARCUS) FABATIUS DOMITIUS PANCRATIUS LI | BERTUS ET PROCURATOR PATRONAE PIISIMAE.

To Fabatia Polla Fabia Domitia Gelliola, daughter of Lucius, wife of a consul, who was a torch-bearer. Marcus Fabatius Domitius Pancratius, her freedman and procurator, to his very dutiful patroness.

At Eleusis the torch-bearer, who carried the torch of Demeter, ranked second in the sacerdotal hierarchy, and was the assistant of the high priest. She symbolized the role of Ceres/Demeter who went to the underworld to search for her daughter Persephone/Kore. It is therefore highly likely that Fabatia was a priestess in the cult of Ceres.<sup>156</sup> Another epitaph at nearby Tupusuctu [*CIL* 8842] refers to Fabia Audicaena as a *mater sacrorum*, also the title given to two women in the cult of Bellona, and in that of Jupiter Hammon and Silvanus. In the

<sup>155</sup> On this aspect see RIVES (1995): *Religion and authority in Roman Carthage from Augustus to Constantine*, 160-161, who links this assimilation of the public cult 'with the change in the ordo which shaped it', which in time became more and more African in its composition. THOMPSON (1969): 'Settler and native in the urban centres of Roman Africa', 170-181, estimates that by the 2<sup>nd</sup> century AD the élites in African cities had high percentages of African background, from 71% (Madauros) to 33% (Simitthus).

<sup>156</sup> The diffusion of the worship of Demeter/Ceres is discussed by CHARLES-PICARD (1954): *Les religions de l'Afrique antique*, 88-90 and 184-186.



following example Ladjimi-Sebaï (1977: 160) speculates that the dedication to Juno may be a reference to the senior function of Sallustia Luperca in the cult of Ceres:

[CIL 1140]

CARTHAGE (CARTHAGO)

IUNONI | SALLUSTIAE M(ARCI) FIL(IAE) | LUPERCAE SACERDOT(I) CER(ERUM or ERIS).

To the Juno (of) Sallustia Luperca, daughter of Marcus, priestess of Ceres/of the Cereres.

The hierarchical terminology is limited enough to allow for an alternative interpretation of the following inscription found on an altar to the explanation provided by Gsell's commentary in *Inscriptions latines de l'Algérie*, Volume I, 190:

[CIL 1623]

LE KEF (SICCA VENERIA)

CERERI | AUG(USTAE) SAC(RUM) | VALERIA | SATURNINA | SACERDOS | MAIOR FLA|MINICA PO|SUERE

Consecrated to Ceres Augusta. Valeria Saturnina, priestess; Valeria Maior, flaminica, erected this.

According to the commentary, the text would read 'Valeria Saturnina, senior priestess and lifetime priestess of the Cereres'. Ladjimi-Sebaï (1977: 111) has suggested that, since the terms *sacerdos maior* or *flaminica maior* do not occur anywhere else, and it therefore seems more likely that the interpretation should translate to 'Valeria Saturnina, Valeria Maior', therefore indicating two priestesses, possibly sisters, which is why the *nomen* Valeria is not repeated.

The lowest rung of the cult hierarchy, the initiates, is also represented in this cult. In the Roman arena, condemned Christian women were sometimes made to dress like initiates of Ceres, the men as priests of Saturn [*Passio P & F* 18.4].

The following three inscriptions do not specify any particular cult, but a number of features imply that they are high priestesses in the cult of Ceres, not least the fact that in Africa the title *sacerdos magna* is peculiar to this cult. In addition all three inscriptions derive from an area in which the cult of the Cereres is particularly well represented, and the three inscriptions all bear reference to advanced age.

TABLE IIIB: HIGH PRIESTESSES, CULT UNSPECIFIED

NR	REFERENCE	PLACE	NAME & STATUS	FAMILY	AGE	EPITHETS	CONTEXT
xiv	CIL 14437	Belalis Maior	Maria Extricata, <i>sacerdos magna</i>	none mentioned	103	<i>pia</i>	epitaph
xv	CIL 25503	Saia Maior	[...], <i>sacerdos magna</i>	none mentioned	95	<i>pia</i>	epitaph
xvi	CIL 10575	Saltus Burunitanus	Caecilia Zaba, <i>sacerdos magna</i>	none mentioned	85	none	epitaph

A clear distinction is made between men as priests of Ceres and the priesthoods for women mentioned above. Where men are mentioned as priests of Ceres [for example CIL 26267], their priestly title is sometimes part of a list of the other offices, which suggests that the priesthood of Ceres for that particular town was also a municipal office, as argued by Rives for Carthage (1995: 45-46). As far as we are able to tell, priests of Ceres were citizens who filled annual posts, and the office was assimilated to a magistracy for men.<sup>157</sup> At Carthage the Cereales was a college which admitted women and freedmen to the rank of priest, while the annual civic

<sup>157</sup> In these aspects they were essentially different from the *sacerdotes Cereris* in Republican Rome (who were Greek in origin) whose offices were not annual and were not linked to a magistracy. On this see LE BONNIEC (1958): *Le culte de Ceres à Rome: des origines à la fin de la republique*.



priesthood in the cult was held by prominent male citizens (Rives 1995: 159).

Honorary statues are implied in the case of the priestesses Valeria Concessa of Bulla Regia and Cornelia Licinia from Ammaedara, where the children of the priestess in each case contributed by paying for the base of the statue. At Ammaedara the worship of Ceres was one of the official cults (Rives 1995: 145), and it is likely that Cornelia Licinia had been a benefactress of the town in her official capacity. Also at Bulla Regia, Ceres was one of the patron deities of the city, together with Apollo and Aesculapius (Charles-Picard 1954: 183). In the case of Valeria Concessa the site for the statue was given by a decree of the decurions, also implying that she had been a benefactress to the community. Actual patronage is known in only one case. In 35/6 AD a shrine to Ceres Augusta was built in the upper part of the theatre at Lepcis Magna by Suphunibal, daughter of Annobal Ruso (Bandinelli 1966: 58), and neither she nor her father are known in any other official capacity or from any other source.

## VII. ISIS

The myth of Isis and Osiris is well known,<sup>158</sup> and it is the loyalty of Isis to her dead husband Osiris which connected the goddess to sexuality within the confines of wifely fidelity: 'Isis in the Graeco-Roman world was above all else the faithful wife and indeed the divine patroness of family life and instructress in such domestic arts as weaving and spinning' (Witt 1971: 41).<sup>159</sup> In this she is contrasted to the fertility deities with which she is sometimes identified.<sup>160</sup> Under the Severan emperors, especially Caracalla, the cults of Isis and Sarapis reached the height of their popularity and the cult experienced its last surge towards the close of the 4<sup>th</sup> century,<sup>161</sup> after which the Serapeum in Alexandria was destroyed and pagan rites and sacrifices suppressed. Its general popularity in the African provinces is indicated by a number of statues of Isis which have been found (Charles-Picard 1954: 224-225), and we have some details about the cult from Book 11 of Apuleius' *Metamorphoses*.<sup>162</sup> But notwithstanding the growing popularity of the Isis cult in the Roman Empire prior to its



FIGURE 12.10 PRIESTESS OF ISIS

<sup>158</sup> The myth is discussed by HEYOB (1975): *The cult of Isis among women in the Greco-Roman world*, Chapter 2, 'The essential nature of Isis', 37-52.

<sup>159</sup> Isis was also sometimes present as a witness to marriage vows, see for example Achilles Tatius [5.14].

<sup>160</sup> The connection of Isis as the wife of Sarapis was essentially Hellenistic and associated with a cult type which differed from that of Egyptian Isis (Heyob 1975: 9), of which there is also evidence in Roman Africa (see Figure 1, which possibly originated from a Serapeum and p. 135 n. 57). Priestesses are however always styled as priestesses of Isis, rather than as priestesses of Isis and Sarapis, or of Sarapis (Heyob 1975: 89). One inscription [CIL 2629] refers to a priest of Jupiter -Pluto-Sarapis, a typical example of African syncretism.

<sup>161</sup> A series of coins with the images of Isis and Sarapis struck between 379/80 and 395 was possibly motivated by a desire to win the popularity of the lower classes (Heyob 1975: 35).

<sup>162</sup> The emotionalism of its devotees is referred to by Augustine, though indirectly, through Seneca [*De Civ. Dei* 6.10]. There is no evidence that Augustine himself witnessed such rites. Minucius Felix [*Oct.* 23.1] also seems less than well informed on the mythology of the cult, commenting on the public appearance of women in ritual mourning for the 'son' of Isis, whom he calls Sarapis or Osiris, rather than Horus.



suppression under Christianity, epigraphically for women it is not particularly well attested in Roman Africa.<sup>163</sup> Our references also give more indications of men as priests of Isis than to women as priestesses, and this seems to be in keeping with the evidence for the rest of the Empire (Heyob 1975: 81; 85).<sup>164</sup>

In iconography her priests and priestesses are usually recognizable from their ritual implements, such as the *sistrum* illustrated in Figure 12.10, which is also mentioned in inscriptions such as the epitaph to Iulia Sidonia Felix quoted above, and which was usually held in the right hand. Figure 12.11 shows part of a mosaic calendar of 354, illustrating figures of the months. The left panel once showed November as a priestess of Isis holding

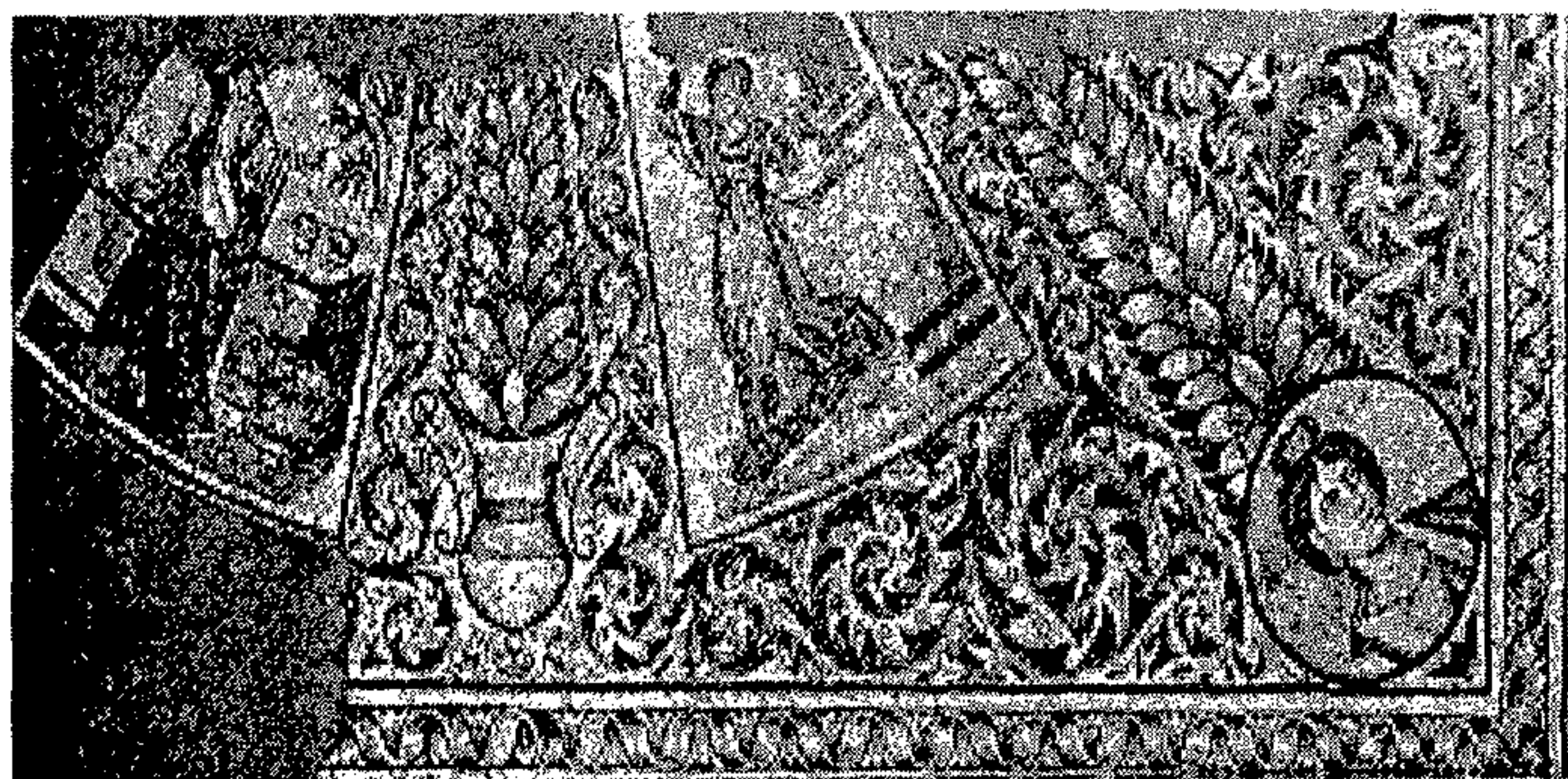


FIGURE 12.11 MOSAIC OF THE MONTHS AND SEASONS

a sistrum in her right hand (October 28 to November 1 are the days indicated on the 4<sup>th</sup> century calendar of Philocalus as the time set aside for the feast called the *Isia* (Heyob 1975: 54)).<sup>165</sup> In the left hand a water bucket or jar or ladle was the most common object held. Heyob (1975: 60) describes the general characteristics of her appearance: 'long hair with a band on the forehead and curls falling on the shoulder, a tunic with narrow sleeves, a mantle with fringe and knot, falling in two pleats in front, a sistrum in the right hand, and a small situla in the left'. Some depictions also show the priestess holding the *cista mystica* or sacred box, in which the secrets of the religion were kept, and which is also referred to by Apuleius [*Metam.* 11.11].

Under the influence of Demeter worship, mysteries were introduced into the Isis cult, for example the initiation rites (Heyob 1975: 60), described in the *Metamorphoses*. For women, ten days of sexual abstinence preceding the initiation rites were required (Heyob 1975: 58). Initiation included not only the priesthood, but all devotees of Isis, although women are only mentioned in inscriptions from the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> centuries (Heyob 1975: 58). In the description of the procession given by Apuleius only male priests are mentioned, even though the procession is led by women dressed in white vestments, probably in the four groups represented by the different ritual implements they are described as carrying, or by ritual gestures [*Metam.* 11.9]. Heyob (1975: 96) is of the opinion that since they are not described as wearing linen robes, these were not priestesses but 'belonged to

<sup>163</sup> A survey of the Isis cult by HEYOB (1975): *The cult of Isis among women in the Greco-Roman world*, 138-139, mentions only two inscriptions from the African provinces which record women as priestesses. It appears nevertheless to have had a large popular following in these provinces by (Charles-Picard 1954: 224-225). The tables by MACMULLEN (1981): *Paganism in the Roman Empire*, 6, comparing the popularity of the most prominent cults in the Roman Empire province by province, rates the volume of evidence of Isis-Sarapis worship in the African provinces second only to Italy (excluding Rome and Ostia).

<sup>164</sup> In the Empire as a whole, while women devotees are more often mentioned in literature - a number of aretalogies (Greek hymns celebrating Isis in her various functions) have survived, explaining why women in particular looked to the goddess for protection (Heyob 1975: 45) - in inscriptions there are more male followers of the cult.

<sup>165</sup> DUNBABIN (1980): 'A mosaic workshop in Carthage around AD 400', 74-5, points out that although the Months and Seasons were popular in Christian art, the choice of pagan figures here points to the patron himself being a pagan. The selection of Isis to represent November, the month in which her feast was celebrated, would seem to confirm this impression.



some lay cult association which had responsibilities similar to those of the stolists', those who robed and adorned the statue of Isis in the morning and reversed the process at night. There is also no other evidence of priestesses of Isis who fulfilled the role of chief priest at any of her temples (Heyob 1975: 95). The next group, carrying lights, was composed of men and women, while no gender is given for the singers and instrumentalists. The initiates who followed were also composed of both 'men and women of every rank and age' (*virī feminaeque omnis dignitatis et omnis aetatis*) [11.10]. Heyob (1975: 105) notes that a very strong laity was characteristic of the Isiac cult.

The title of priestess is given in one instance from Numidia. It appears that, unlike in the cult of the Cereres, youth was no hindrance to the priesthood of Isis:

CONSTANTINE (CIRTA) [LALG II, 809]  
D(IIS) M(ANIBUS) | MEMORIAE IULIA SIDONIA FELIX | DE NOMINE TANTUM | CUI NEFAS ANTE DIEM |  
RUPERUNT STEMINA PAR | CAE QUAM PROCUS HEU | NUPTIIS HYMENEOS CON | TIGIT IGNES INGEMUERE |  
OMNES DRYADES DOLUERE PUELLAE | ET LUCINA FACIS DEMERSO LUMI | NE FLEVIT. VIRGO QUOD ET  
SO | LUM PIGNUS FUERATQUE PAREN | TUM MENPHIDOS HAEC FU | ERAT DIVAE SISTRATAE SACER | DOS HIC  
TUMULATA SILET | AETERNO MUNERE SOMNI | V(IXIT) A(NNIS) XVIII M(ENSIBUS) XIII | H(IC) S(ITA) E(ST).  
Remembered to the souls of the departed. Iulia Sidonia Felix, of only a name, for whom the fates unfortunately cut the thread of life before the day, as a suitor, alas, already touched the engagement with the wedding torch. All the dryads groaned, the young girls grieved, Lucina wept, the light of the torch was reversed. A virgin who had been the sole hope of her parents. She was a priestess, carrying the sistrum of the god of Memphis. Under her tomb, she is silent, under the burden of eternal sleep. She lived 19 years, 4 months and 14 days. Here she lies.<sup>166</sup>

All the evidence from the Roman period indicates that priestesses of Isis were appointed for life (Heyob 1975: 91-92), and although this is not specifically indicated by the African inscription, it is likely to have been valid also here, had she not died so young.

Despite the fact that in Caesarea the worship of this Egyptian goddess was promoted by Cleopatra Selene (Decret and Fantar 1981: 272), there is no evidence for *liberalitas* by priestesses of Isis in any official capacity. A memorial dedication to the temple of Isis and Sarapis was found near the temple of Aesculapius at Lambaesis, erected by a popraetorian legatus, Lucius Mattucius Fuscinus, his wife, Volteia Cornificia, and their daughter, Matuccia Fuscina [CIL 2630]. The temple was later embellished by a portico with columns by the soldiers of the *Legio III Augusta* around AD 158. In another badly damaged inscription from Volubilis [CIL 21847; ILM 55] dated to the 3<sup>rd</sup> century, a woman named Lucilla, a *flaminica*, makes a dedication to Isis, but her connection to the goddess is not clear.

## VIII. VENUS - ASTARTE

In the same calendar featuring a priestess of Isis (Figure 12.11 above), the figure of April dancing in front of a shrine (right panel) is possibly a priestess of Venus (Dunbabin 1980: 74-5). The Latin inscriptions usually give the goddess her Roman name rather than the Greek Aphrodite or the Punic Astarte. The cult of Venus was popular in Africa, particularly around Cirta and Mactaris, from the number of statues and inscriptions found there. We know that the cult had official status at Mactaris since an inscription erected to Terentia Sperata, *sacerdos* [CIL 23405], at a small sanctuary dedicated to Venus in the town, begins with a salutation to the

<sup>166</sup> Another epitaph [AE 1969/70, 658, 3<sup>rd</sup> century from Mactaris], although there is no reference to Isis, contains some similarities in its references to Lucina, to the wedding torch, and in the youthfulness of the deceased, where death has cut short her wedding plans. Discussed by CHARLES-PICARD (1970): 'Le cippe de Beccut'.



emperor Geta and his mother Iulia Domna. An epitaph found near Mactaris [CIL 680] is dedicated to Aurelia Vindicia, *sacerdos Veneris*, who lived to the age of 80, and to Marcus Aurelius, a priest who lived to the age of 70. It is possible that Marcus Aurelius (husband, brother or father) was also a priest of Venus, but his affiliation is unfortunately illegible.

To the North at Thugga a freedwoman named Licinia Prisca erected a shrine to Venus and Concordia in AD 54.:

DOUGGA (THUGGA) [AE 1969/70, 650]

[FORTUNAE AUG(USTAE) V]ENERI CONCORDIAE SACRUM / [PRO SALUTE M(ARCI) LICINI RUFII PATRONI  
LICINIA] M(ARCI) L(IBERTA) PRISCA LICINI TYRANNI UXOR FLAMIN[ICA PERPETUA? TEMPLUM] S(UA) P(ECUNIA)  
F(ACIENDUM) C(URAVIT) IDEMQUE DEDICAVIT.

Consecrated to Fortuna Augusta of Venus Concordia. For the health of her patron, M. Licinius Rufus, Licinia Prisca, wife of Licinius Tyrannus, flaminica (perpetua?) has constructed the temple at her own cost and has made the dedication.

The inscription makes her both the dedicator and donor, and since dedicators were usually public magistrates, the shrine must have had private status. Her husband, M. Licinius Tyrannus, was in fact the patron of the *pagus* [AE 1969/70, 648], while she is mentioned as a *flaminica*, in both cases high positions for freedpersons. It is very likely that they managed the estates of their patron, M. Licinius Rufus, and thus occupied positions of local status.

## IX. LIBER PATER - BACCHUS - DIONYSUS

The cult of Liber Pater or Bacchus, protector of the vine, is also thought to have been assimilated with an autochthonous fertility cult, which would explain its popularity in Africa (Bruhl 1953: 224). The cult certainly appealed to all levels of society, and it was an official as well as a mystery religion. At Lepcis Magna, the cult was associated with that of Hercules-Melkart, the legendary founder of the city, and it subsequently received some attention under the Severan emperors. Also at Sabratha an inscription attests to a prominent citizen who was a *flamen Liberi Patris*, the only time that this high office is attested for the cult (Bruhl 1953: 224).<sup>167</sup> The worship of Liber Pater is also evident from other cities, but its priests and priestesses did not receive the high municipal offices here.<sup>168</sup>

At Thubursicu Numidarum two priestesses of the cult (both of relatively humble status) are attested (Bruhl 1953: 226): Laeta, daughter of Rufus, who died at the age of 61, is referred to as *sacerdos templi Liberi Patris* [ILAlg I, 1372], and was probably not a Roman citizen. By coincidence the other priestess of the cult bears the same cognomen: Fabia Laeta, who died at the age of 57 [CIL 4883 = ILAlg I, 1368/9]. At Thamugadi a father, mother, two sons and a daughter are all mentioned as followers of the cult [ILS 3368]. The men are mentioned as a *cistifer* and *pedisequarius* each, while the women are *pedisequariae* only.<sup>169</sup> The precise rung on the hierarchy held by the female officials of the cult is unclear. From the evidence given here it would seem that in the official procession the women followed the men (who held the sacred chest or box) on foot, and it is also likely that these women were not priestesses in the proper sense of the word, but simply performed certain cultic rituals.

<sup>167</sup> The cult is also mentioned by Apuleius [Apol. 60.8]. For a review of the epigraphical evidence from Africa, see BRUHL (1953): *Liber pater*, 223-238.

<sup>168</sup> See also the comments of BÉNABOU (1976a): *La résistance africaine à la romanisation*, 352-325, on the role of the cult in Romanization.

<sup>169</sup> The former title is also associated with the worship of Bellona, but the latter is not usually connected to the worship of Bacchus (Bruhl 1953: 237).



## X. IMPERIAL CULT<sup>170</sup>

Many dedications to a number of gods include wishes for the emperor's good health (*pro salute Imperatoris*) in the vague belief that if the deity protected the emperor, this would ensure the dedicator's own prosperity. This view of the emperor almost as an intermediary received its formal expression in the Imperial cult, which was celebrated especially in the provinces and followed the same basic form as that for other Roman gods. Where the word *flamen/flaminica* had originally been used to denote a priest of the official Roman gods,<sup>171</sup> under the Empire it also designated priests in the service of the Imperial cult, and it is the latter with which we will be concerned here. In the latter context the epithet *perpetuus/perpetua* is often added to it, but the exact meaning of this is unclear, since it could mean either an honorary title given on completion of the year of office, or an active position.<sup>172</sup> In either case it would explain the large number of bearers of this title which have been found.<sup>173</sup> *Flamines* could either be responsible for the imperial cult in general or for a particular emperor or empress, possibly where one of the imperial couple had been particularly generous towards a community.<sup>174</sup> It was certainly a cult in which a priesthood would locate the bearer in the hierarchy of political power, at least for men (Rives 1995: 112).<sup>175</sup>

### Functions, duties, activities

The flamate in Africa shows no unique features which cannot be seen elsewhere in the Roman world. Throughout the Empire games and other examples of munificence were given in honour of the emperor and his family. The *flamen perpetuus* as well as the *flaminica perpetua* offered the prayers and vows of the citizens to the deified imperial pair, either singly or as a couple. These and the accompanying sacrifices were designed to uphold the fabric of society across the Empire.<sup>176</sup> In emperor-worship imperial policy encouraged to a limited extent the idea of a universal religion, particularly after the edict of Caracalla in 212 which declared universal citizenship.<sup>177</sup> For Africans the notion of emperor worship was not entirely foreign, since even though they themselves did not worship living men, a belief existed that a person who was particularly privileged possessed an element of the sacred (Decret and Fantar 1981: 259). Perpetual and municipal flaminates were chosen by

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<sup>170</sup> All references to numbers in this section are to the Table in Appendix A. On the Imperial cult in Africa Proconsularis see FISHWICK (1978a): 'The development of provincial ruler worship in the western Roman empire', 1201-1253 as well as (1987): *The imperial cult in the Latin west*, vol I.2, 257-268.

<sup>171</sup> Varro [*De Ling. Lat.* 5.84] explains the origin of the term *flamen* in that 'they always kept their heads covered and had their hair girt with a woolen *filium* (band), they were originally called *filimines*'.

<sup>172</sup> On this aspect see JARRETT (1971): 'Decurions and priests', 526-527; RIVES (1995): *Religion and authority in Roman Carthage from Augustus to Constantine*, 58.

<sup>173</sup> This is defined against the numbers for other priesthoods. JACQUES (1984): *Le privilège de liberté*, 730, counts sixty-five perpetual *flamines* in Africa Proconsularis and Numidia, and twenty *flamines* in the same two provinces.

<sup>174</sup> RIVES (1995): *Religion and authority in Roman Carthage*, 58 n.86, arrives at a total of fourteen *flamines* known for individual deified emperors from Carthage, six from Lepcis Magna and twelve from the rest of Africa, concluding that separate flaminates were a luxury for wealthy cities. However, our two examples of *flaminicae* of this type derive from Cirta in Numidia and Soliman in Africa Proconsularis, and the latter at least was only a small town.

<sup>175</sup> On the flamate in a municipal career, see CID-LOPEZ (1988): 'Los 'flamines annui' del norte Africano. Notas sobre la ducracion del sacerdocio municipal del culto al emperador', 157-164.

<sup>176</sup> The sacrificial role of the Punic priests was subsumed under this function, a role indicated in both cases by the sacrificial knife, the *secespita* (Lipiński 1995: 460). Lipiński makes no mention of women associated with this implement in either case.

<sup>177</sup> An aspect especially emphasized by the persecutions which demanded sacrifice to the Roman gods.



the municipal councils of their particular cities, in return for which the councillors who had voted them into office were thanked, for example with *sportulae*.<sup>178</sup> Once a year the provincial assembly, composed of the delegates of the municipal assemblies, met in Carthage to choose the provincial *flamen* and *flaminica* who would solemnize the official cult in the name of the whole.

### Husbands and wives

In Rome where all the great Roman deities were represented by *flamines*, a prerequisite of the office had been at least the intention of getting married.<sup>179</sup> Husband and wife functioned as a couple, and it is possible that they were invested with sacrificial rights as a unit. Because of this, the question arises as to whether women's offices in the provinces were granted because of the office of their husbands. In fact, this has proved to be not necessarily the case in the African provinces, as the *flaminicae* listed in the table in Appendix A show. Firstly in a number of cases men are given the title *flamen perpetuus* with no corresponding title given to their wives, who are mentioned by name in the same text.<sup>180</sup> It was therefore not automatic that the wives of prominent officials were given priesthoods analogous to those of their husbands (and such a title was too important to omit). Secondly, where we have evidence that the *flaminicae* were married, their husbands were not always *flamines*. Lastly, there is some evidence of *flaminicae* who were in fact not married at all, such as Flavia Pacata (nr. 19), Quinta (nr. 72) or Maedia Lentula (nr. 108). On the other hand, these priestesses were often the daughters of *flamines*, or flamines are encountered elsewhere in their family, and this would no doubt have weighed in their favour.

### Status

The flamine was a particularly public and prestigious priesthood, which for men was more often than not coupled with the dignity and honour of a political career. For women such a career was of course not possible, but the position was nevertheless accompanied by some prestige. At Rome *flaminicae* were distinguished by dress,<sup>181</sup> although the style demonstrated by one statue from Bulla Regia is not particularly distinctive. The inscription [CIL 25530] proclaims the statue to be Minia Procula, the wife of C. Sallustius Dexter (nr. 10). The *stola* and *palla* (worn over head and shoulders) are not particularly unique, and her hairstyle is the *tutulus*, worn also by priestesses of Ceres and Saturn.<sup>182</sup>

Social order was no barrier in being granted the flamine, and women from the senatorial to the freedwoman class are known to have held this priesthood. We know of only two instances where a *clarissima femina* was granted a flamine. Didia Cornelia Ingenua (nr. 140)<sup>183</sup> at Djemila and Manlia Pudentilla (nr. 165) at

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<sup>178</sup> In one case, at Cirta, Sittia Calpurnia Extricata is elected by popular consensus (*flam. perp. ex consensu populi*) [CIL 7119; ILAlg II, 693]. Possibly the citizens of the town made their feelings felt to the *ordo*, as occasionally happened in Late Antiquity regarding the appointment of Christian clergy.

<sup>179</sup> On the origins of the flamine and the Republican period, see VANGGAARD (1988): *The flamen. A study in the history and sociology of Roman religion*.

<sup>180</sup> See for example the inscriptions quoted by MARCILLET-JAUBERT (1987): 'Sur des flamines perpetuels de Numide', nr XIV, XVIII.

<sup>181</sup> BOELS (1973): 'Le statut religieux de la Flaminica Dialis', 80-81, discusses the special clothing of the *Flaminica Dialis*.

<sup>182</sup> On the insignia and costume of the *flamen* and *flaminica*, see FISHWICK (1991): *The imperial cult in the Latin west*, vol. II.2, 475-481

<sup>183</sup> The PFOS 276-277 distinguishes between the *flaminica* Didia Cornelia Ingenua and the senatorial Didia Cornelia, whom the author



Thamugadi. A fair number can however be seen to have had equestrian family connections: Herennia Quarta (nr. 83); Flavia Procilla (nr. 158); Iulia Celsina Senior (nr. 30). Two women are known to have been married to equestrians: Cornelia Valentina Tucciana (nr. 160-164) and Aemilia Sextina (nr. 192), while four had equestrian sons: Peducaea Sextia (nr. 1); Maria Lucina (nr. 55); Iulia Bassilia (nr. 86); and Vettia Saturnina (nr. 148). The flaminiate was also granted to a number of women who were of African origin: Quinta, daughter of Germanus at Sutunurca (nr. 72), Nahania Victoria (nr. 116-119), Asicia Victoria (104-107), Botria Fortunata (nr. 121-122) and Fabia Bira (nr. 188-191), the daughter of Izelta (who was most certainly of Berber origin). The latter most certainly received her flaminiate through the career of her husband, M. Valerius Severus, the son of Bostar. For women of indigenous origins these are clear examples of upward social mobility.

For the most part *flaminicae* are mentioned in honorary inscriptions, mostly of the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> centuries. Only a few names derive from the 1<sup>st</sup> century AD:

- Licinia Prisca, *flaminica perpetua*, freedwoman (Thugga) (nr. 100-102)
- Coelia Victoria Potita, *flaminica Divae Augustae* (= Livia, deified under Claudius) (Cirta) (nr. 133)
- Fabia Bira, *flaminica prima in municipio Volubilis* (nr. 188-191)
- Ocratina, *flaminica provincia Tingitana*, also at Volubilis (nr. 187)
- Caninia Tertia, *flaminica Augustae*, Thuburnica. Her husband was also *flamen* (nr. 93)
- Flavia Germanilla, *flaminica provincia*, Annoceur (Kasba Aît Khelifa) (nr. 185)

The diversity of the above titles no doubt reflects the fact that the cult was newly established and not yet as organized as older cults (Ladjimi-Sebaï 1990a: 653).

### The numbers of *flaminicae* in the African provinces

Ladjimi-Sebaï (1990a) has counted 68 *flaminicae* in Africa from the 1<sup>st</sup> to the 3<sup>rd</sup> centuries AD. The predominance of the oldest and most Romanized African province is marked. Africa Proconsularis yielded 46, Numidia 13 and the Mauretaniae 9 *flaminicae*. It is nevertheless in the regions which are the least Romanized that we encounter the most prestigious ranks of this priesthood for women. Only in the case of Mauretania Tingitana do we have two instances of a *flaminica provinciae* (nrs. 185 and 187) (Fishwick 1987: 283). It is possible, as suggested by Ladjimi-Sebaï (1990a: 654), that this is the result of high imperial offices making more of an impression in less Romanized territories. It is even more suggestive, however, that the largest number of *flaminicae provinciae* in the whole of the Roman Empire (14) has been found across the Strait in Spain.<sup>184</sup> These two women are our only African examples of this office.<sup>185</sup> The first, Ocratina, was the wife of M. Valerius Sassius Pudens, who was related to the gens *Valeria*, a family of some social prestige in Volubilis. His ancestor, M. Valerius Sassius, had held the flaminiate together with his wife, Fabia Bira, under Claudius.<sup>186</sup>

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believes to be sisters. LADJIMI-SEBAÏ (1990a): 'À propos du flaminat féminin dans les provinces africaines', 666, on the other hand, speaks of Didia Cornelia Ingenua as the daughter of the equestrian Crescens Didius Crescentianus, who obtained the title *clarissima femina* by marriage. Since the *PFOS* is unable to connect either woman to a senatorial father, Ladjimi-Sebaï is surely correct.

<sup>184</sup> The study by ETIENNE (1958): *Le culte impérial dans la péninsule Ibérique d'Auguste à Dioclétien*, indicates also the largest number of *flamines provinciae*, namely 87, in Spain. Spanish women were generally also active benefactors (Curchin 1983: 236).

<sup>185</sup> This in contrast to *flamines* in the same position, called variously *flamen*-, *sacerdos*- or *flamen Aug. prov.* (Duncan-Jones 1968: 155-158; Jarrett 1971: 527). Only one *flamen provinciae* is known from the Mauretaniae, specifically from Caesarea: Sex. Valerius L. filius Quiri Municeps [CIL 9409 = 21066] (Bassignano 1974: 351 nr.5).

<sup>186</sup> It was M. Valerius Sassius who obtained numerous advantages, including the *civitatem Romanam et conubium peregrinis mulieribus*,



His own name does not, however, occur in any magisterial capacity, religious or otherwise. It is likely that Ocratina obtained her own prestigious title because of the illustrious family of her husband.

Our other instance is Flavia Germanilla from Annoceur, although she was doubtlessly *flaminica provinciae* at Volubilis where her office was exercised (Fishwick 1972-74: 699). Her husband is not known from elsewhere, but it is suggested by Ladjimi-Sebaï (1990a: 656) that her father may be the T. Flavius Germanus known from a villa to the North-East of the city, and a member of a prestigious and wealthy family in the district.

### Municipal *flaminicae*

The largest number of municipal flaminates have been found in the African provinces and their diverse character is attributed to the fact that the municipal flamate arose more or less spontaneously and was not under the authority of the emperor, as was the case with provincial flaminates (Ladjimi-Sebaï 1990a: 658). A number of *flaminicae* are associated in their title with a particular city (nrs. 1, 2, 18, 31, 41, 52, 92, 188-191), or a particular group of cities (nrs. 132 and 168), in other words, municipal *flaminicae*.<sup>187</sup> Sometimes the title of the *flaminica* associates her with a particular emperor or empress, either alive or deified (nrs. 133 and 70). Only two examples of this have been found in Roman Africa, one serving the deified Livia and one serving the deified Plotina.<sup>188</sup>

In one case it appears that a *flaminica* served the imperial couple, abbreviated as *flam. Augg. pp.* (nrs. 15-16):

GUELMA (CALAMA)

[CIL 5366; ILALGI, 287]

ANNIAE AELI | AE L(UCI) FIL(IAE) RESTIT[U | T]AE FLAM(INICAE) AUG(USTORUM DUORUM) | [P]E(ER)P(ETUAE) OB EGREGIAM IN [S]UOS CIVES LIBERA | [L]ITATEM THEATRO | PECUNIA SUA EXOR | NANDA [E PAT]RIAE SPONTE P[ROM]ISSO | AD REFERENDAM GR[A]TIAM | ORDO UNIVER | SUS STATUA[S] N(UMERO) QUINQ(UE) | DE PU[BL(ICO)] FACIEND[AS] | DECREVIT.

To Annia Aelia Restituta, daughter of Lucius, flaminica perpetua of the two Augusti, for her munificence towards the citizens, having promised to pay for a theatre to decorate the town from her own funds. As proof of this recognition, the ordo of decurions have together decided to erect five statues at public cost.

This does appear to be a singular case, however, since the theatre donated by Annia Aelia is elsewhere [CIL 5365 = 17495] specified at 400 000 sesterces, a very high sum. This inscription mentions that her father, L. Aelius Annius Clementis, has also been a *flamen* in the same town, and Aelia may in fact have 'inherited' his function, as *flaminica* of both Augustus and Augusta under the Antonines.

In other cases women are not directly addressed as *flaminicae* but we can deduce their flaminates because they are mentioned in honorary inscriptions, for example (nr. 148):

MAFOUNA (LAMSORTIS)

[CIL 18596]

GENIO LAMSO | [RTENSI] AUG(USTO) VET | TIA SATURNINA | MATER DUOR | UM EQ(UITUM) ROMA | [N]ORUM HOSTI | LIORUM SATUR | NINI ET FELICIS | CONIUNX L(UCI) | HOSTILI FELI | CIS PONTIFICIS | MUNICIPI | LAMBA | ESITANORUM OB | HONOREM FL(AMONII) P(ERPETUI or -OSUIT) D(EDICAVIT)

To the genius of Augustus of Lamsortis. Vettia Saturnina, mother of two Roman knights, Hostilius Saturninus and Hostilius Felix, wife of Lucius Hostilius Felix, pontifex of the municipium of Lambaesis, (has erected this) and has dedicated it in return for the honour of being elected flaminica (perpetua).

Other terms of reference besides *ob honorem flamonii* are *flaminatus* or *flaminicatus*.<sup>189</sup>

Where inscriptions use only the term *flaminica* rather than the combination of *flaminica perpetua* (nrs. 55, 57, 60-

for his fellow citizens from the emperor Claudius [ILA 634; ILM 116].

<sup>187</sup> In the latter case they are styled *flaminicae* of the four colonies, for example at Cirta, a federation which included Rusicade, Chullu, Mileve and Cuicul, the cities around Cirta.

<sup>188</sup> Livia was deified under Claudius; Plotina, the wife of Trajan, died in 121/122, and was deified by Hadrian.

<sup>189</sup> The term *flaminicatus* occurs only three times in the African context: ILA 561 = CIL 26529; ILT 718; CIL 12317 = 23888.



61, 65, 90, 105 x 2, 148, 159, 165, 166, 167, 186),<sup>190</sup> Ladjimi-Sebaï (1990a: 660) suggests that these may refer to deceased priestesses, or may reflect a local custom. In one instance Aemilia Sextina, originally from Vienna (nr. 192), is recorded as *bis flaminica*, and this conceivably refers to the fact that she held a flamine once in Vienna and then in Volubilis where the inscription was found (Ladjimi-Sebaï 1990a: 664), a theory which supports the notion of an annual flamine in her case.

### Age of the *flaminicae*

In contrast to the cult of the Cereres, age is not often mentioned in the case of the *flaminicae* (we have only eight examples), but a wide variety of ages of the age at death are attested, with an average of 58 years. For men the minimum age for the flamine as a public office was 25, but this may not have been applicable to women. One epitaph reports the age of the *flaminica* Flavia Pacata as 15 (nr. 19), although Ladjimi-Sebaï (1990a: 663) is surely correct in saying that this flamine was purely honorific and intended as a compliment to the girl's father, Titus Flavius Secundus, also a *flamen perpetuus* at Cillium and a member of one of the most prominent families of the region.

### Patronage

Numerous examples have been found where the *flaminica*, either on their own or together with someone like her husband, gave generously to her city, sometimes above and beyond the requirement of her office. In the case of joint benefactions, we may assume from the fact that, where the women are specifically mentioned, they made some financial contribution of their own to the benefaction, for example in the palatial market at Thamugadi paid for by Plotius Faustus Sertius and Cornelia Valentina Tucciana (nrs. 160-164) in response to the naming of the equestrian Plotius Faustus as *flamen perpetuus* when he retired from his army command and settled in his native town. It may also be added that husbands honouring or celebrating the flamines of their wives probably intended their spouses to return the favour.

## UNIDENTIFIED PRIESTESSES

In the last instance we are left with a number of priestesses for whom no cult affiliation is either indicated or can be deduced at first glance. From the above information, however, we are able to place most of these at least tentatively in one or the other of the cults which have been discussed here. The following table lists priestesses for whom no cult affiliation is directly indicated.

TABLE IV: PRIESTESSES WHERE CULT SPECIFICATION IS NOT INDICATED:

NR	REFERENCE	PLACE	NAME AND STATUS	FAMILY	AGE	EPITHETS	CONTEXT
i	CIL 26447 (1)	Hr Abria	Vetula; <i>sacerdos</i>	daughter of Saturninus	91	<i>pia</i>	epitaph
ii	CIL 26447 (2)	Hr Abria	Mundicia Fortunata <i>sacerdo[s]</i>	none mentioned	?	none	?

<sup>190</sup> In a number of instances the text has broken off to leave this uncertain: nrs. 22, 29, 87, 179, 180, 191, 193.



*"Fantasies of Nobility and Heraldic Art"*

iii	<i>CIL</i> 291 = 11485	near Ammaedara	[...]a Secunda <i>sacerdos</i>	<i>fili matri</i>	63	<i>pia</i>	epitaph
iv	<i>CIL</i> 28011; <i>ILAlg.</i> I 2922	near Theveste	Boroct <sup>191</sup> <i>sacerd(os)</i>	none	none given	none	epitaph
v	<i>CIL</i> 14474	Bulla Regia	Staberia Maria, <i>sacerdos</i>	none mentioned, but addressed as <i>mater</i>	80 years	<i>amantissima dulcissima</i>	epitaph
vi	<i>ILAlg</i> I, 1976	Ksar el Frigui	Vasidia Rufilla, <i>sacerdos</i>	wife of Calpurnius Sedatus	32	<i>pia</i>	epitaph
vii	<i>CIL</i> 1650	Sicca Veneria	Vindemanilla, <i>sacerdos</i>	none given	75	none	epitaph
viii	<i>ILA</i> 123	Sufetula	...jesi...a, <i>sacerda</i>	makes gift tog. with Urbanus, <i>sacerdos</i>	none given	none	dedication
ix	<i>ILA</i> 476	Thuburnica	Iulia Victoria, <i>sacerdos</i>	daughter of Marcus	65	<i>pia</i>	epitaph
x	<i>CIL</i> 5938	Saddar	Pollita, <i>sacerdos</i>	none mentioned	97	none	epitaph
xi	<i>CIL</i> 7530; <i>ILAlg</i> II, 828	Cirta	Iulia Victoria, <i>sacerdos deae</i> [...]	[.....]	[.....]	[.....]	?
xii	<i>ILAlg</i> II, 1942	near Cirta	Munatia Lul [...], <i>sacerda</i>	wife of P. Sittius Ianuarius	65	<i>marita sanctissima</i>	epitaph
xiii	<i>ILAlg</i> II, 72	Rusicade	Sittia Urbana, <i>sacerda</i> , <i>caucaria</i>	none mentioned	95	none	epitaph
xiv	<i>CIL</i> 5710; <i>ILAlg</i> II, 6526	Sigus	N...iaia Tertia, <i>sacerdos</i>	none mentioned	75	none	epitaph
xv	<i>ILAlg</i> II, 6528	Sigus	...onia ...agalli, <i>sacerd(os)</i>	[...]	[.....]	[.....]	epitaph
xvi	<i>CIL</i> 9072	Auzia	Rutilia Ianuaria, <i>sacerdos</i>	wife of Caelius Macrinus	45	none	epitaph

Four of the above inscriptions (nrs. ii, viii, xi and xv) are clearly damaged where they might have given cult information. For the remaining twelve inscriptions there are a number of possible or interlinking explanations for not giving the cult affiliation. In the first place thirteen of the sixteen inscriptions are epitaphs. Six of these were erected by family members (for whom perhaps cult affiliation was not a primary concern). The remaining seven are possibly evidence of official cults, and the reason for not declaring the cult has been suggested by Drine (1994: 180), as discussed above.<sup>192</sup> Thus they may have been either priestesses of Saturn or of the Cereres, since these were also the cults in which the largest numbers of priests and priestesses are found in Roman Africa. Since these inscriptions refer to women it is more likely that the *sacerdotes* were involved in the cult of the Cereres, and which would also explain the occasional references to *pia* and the advanced age. A Cereres affiliation therefore seems very likely in nrs. i, iii, ix, x and xii.

The following curious inscription is a unique example in the context of unidentified priesthoods. It is dated by

<sup>191</sup> Boroct is a Punic name, referring to the gift of Baal.

<sup>192</sup> See p. 283 above.



Lassère (1973: 145) to the end of the 2<sup>nd</sup> or beginning of the 3<sup>rd</sup> century AD. Nowhere does it explicitly say that Umbria Matronica was a priestess, but the description of her life makes this a likely option.

COUDIAT ATY (NEAR CIRTA)

[CIL 7604; ILALG II, 834]

D(IS) M(ANIBUS) UMBRIA MA|TRONICA | MATURITAS HOMINUM FUI(T) | A(H) ME SERVITUS LONGINQUA |  
TIMORIS NUMINI(S) HUIUS ET | RELIGIONIS CUI EGO ANNIS| OCTOGINTA SERVIVI ETIAM | NUDO PEDE CASTE  
ET PUDICE ET | INSTANTER UNIVERSAE TERRAE | CIVITATES APPARVI ET IDEO | AB EA SIC MERITA PERTULI  
| UT BENIGNE ME | TERRA RECIPERET | V(IXIT) A(NNIS) CXV | H(IC) S(ITA) E(ST) O(SSA) T(UA) B(ENE)  
Q(UIESCANT)

(down the left side)

D(IS) M(ANIBUS) S(ACRUM) | M(ARCUS) MUNDICIUS | SATURNINUS | V(IXIT) A(NNIS) LXXXXV | H(IC) S(ITUS)  
E(ST) O(SSA) T(UA) B(ENE) Q(UIESCANT).

Consecrated to the souls of the departed. Umbria Matronica. I have achieved the fullness of human life. I have given service out of continual fear of this deity and of the religion which I have served for 80 years, even going barefoot, conducting myself with chastity, modesty and with conviction. I revealed myself in all the cities of the known world, an act of exemplary humility, for which I have deserved that the earth receive me kindly. She lived 115 years. She is buried here. May her bones rest in peace.

Consecrated to the souls of the departed. Marcus Mundicius Saturninus lived 95 years. Here he lies. May his bones rest in peace.

Umbria Matronica appears to have been some sort of itinerant disciple, although the deity she worshipped remains a mystery. Given her fear of the *numen* and her slave-like service, it is unlikely that she was a Christian. According to Pflaum's commentary in the *Inscriptions latines de l'Algérie II*, it is possible that she was a priestess of Ceres/Tellus. But priestesses of Ceres only entered the priesthood at the age of 50 - the youngest was 57 - where Umbricia Matronica appears to have been 35 when she entered the service of the goddess, if these numbers can be trusted. The mention of the *nudo pede* may have some significance, since at the temple of Aesculapius at Thuburbo Maius the rules state: *calciatus intrare nolito* [ILA 225], although going barefoot

to the temple was accepted practice in Graeco-Roman cults, possibly associated with the fact that shoes were made from 'dead' material which was considered polluting (Kleijwegt 1994: 216).

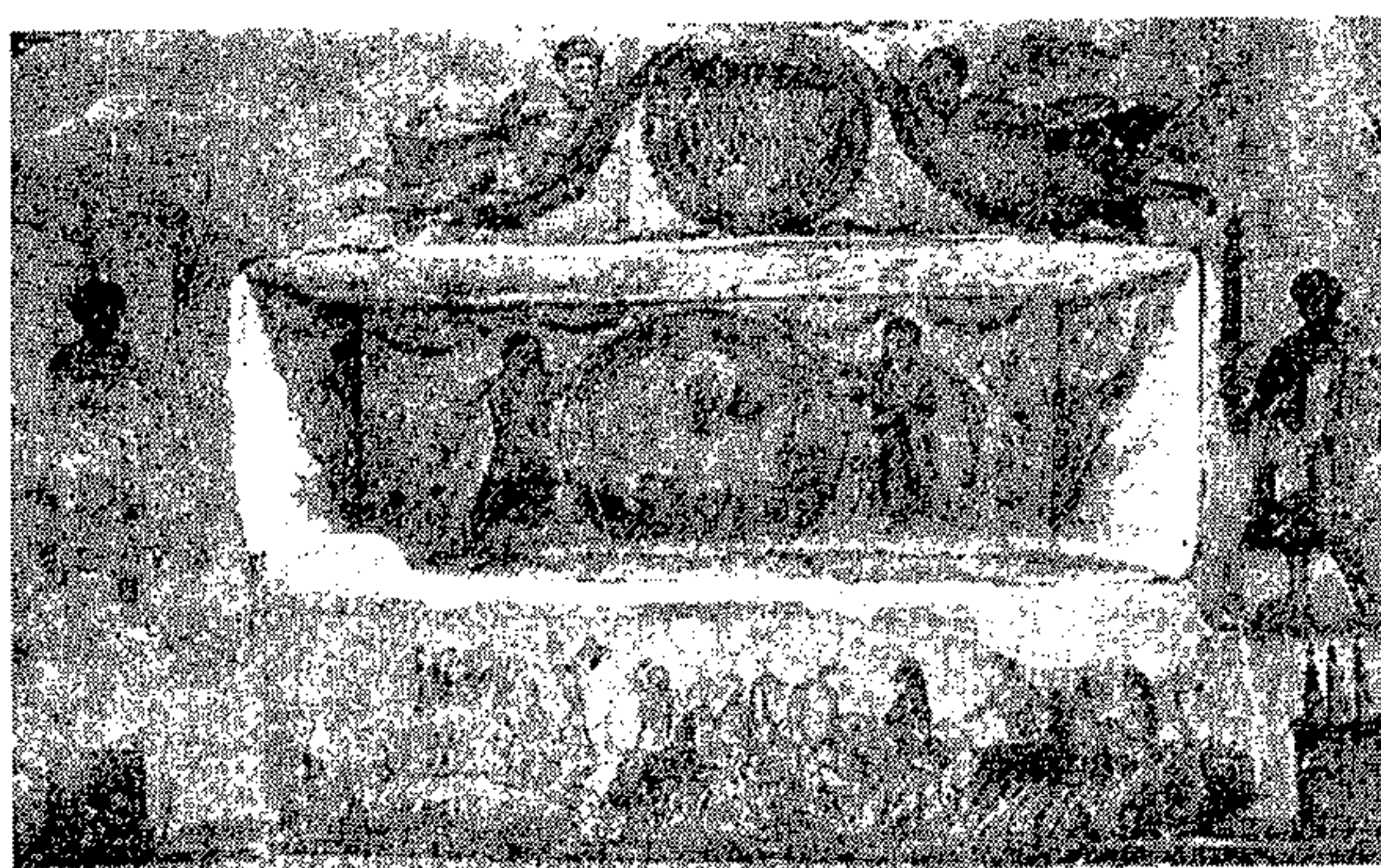


FIGURE 12.12 WALL CONTAINING THE NICHE OF AELIA ARISUTH

Another mysterious cult affiliation is indicated in the case of Aelia Arisuth from Gargàresch.<sup>193</sup> The tomb has a number of strange elements, namely the prominence of the woman, Aelia Arisuth, already discussed above; the meaning of the phrases *quae lea iacet* and *qui leo iacet*;<sup>194</sup> and the racing

<sup>193</sup> The tomb was originally a stone quarry to which a passageway was carved through the rock in the style typical of Punic tombs. The roof was then filled in, made of some sort of perishable material such as wood and covered with rubble. The tomb contained two lavishly decorated funerary niches in the north wall and a double niche in the south wall - the latter does not seem to ever have been used.

<sup>194</sup> The two main niches in the north wall each contained a shaft in which the bodies were placed, which were each covered with stone slabs with perforations and funnels at the head for the customary fragrant oils and perfumes that were sent down to sustain the dead on their journey to the afterlife. These slabs today no longer exist, but according to the first reports on the tomb by Weber and Clermont-Ganneau in 1903, the slabs were plastered and on those of the larger niche a lioness leaping towards the left was painted, and across her body the words 'Quae lea iacet' or 'The lioness who lies (here)'. The slabs of the smaller niche also had a leaping lion and the words 'Qui leo iacet'. According to the *Inscriptions of Roman Tripolitania* website 'cinerary urns' from the tomb are available in Tripoli Castle but inaccessible - the exact text of the IRT reads: 'now believed to be in storage in Tripoli Castle. Not seen' (<http://rubens.anu.edu.au/htdocs/laserdisk/IRT/records/239.html>).



scene painted below the portrait of Aelia.

The latter is painted in some detail and with realistic regard for the garments and the colours of the teams, which correspond with those worn by charioteers in mosaics from this period. Chariots were raced in multiples of four but never more than twelve at a time, divided into four professional stables: Blues, Greens, Reds and Whites. Here the Blues win ahead of the Red team, whose chariot appears to have crashed, while the Greens try to get round it. The Whites are just off to the left of the picture (this part is badly damaged) and look to come second. At either end we have the *metae* with their three cylindrical cones and a crude drawing of the victor, whip in hand, with a victory palm on the left side of the post (Figures 12.12 and 12.13).

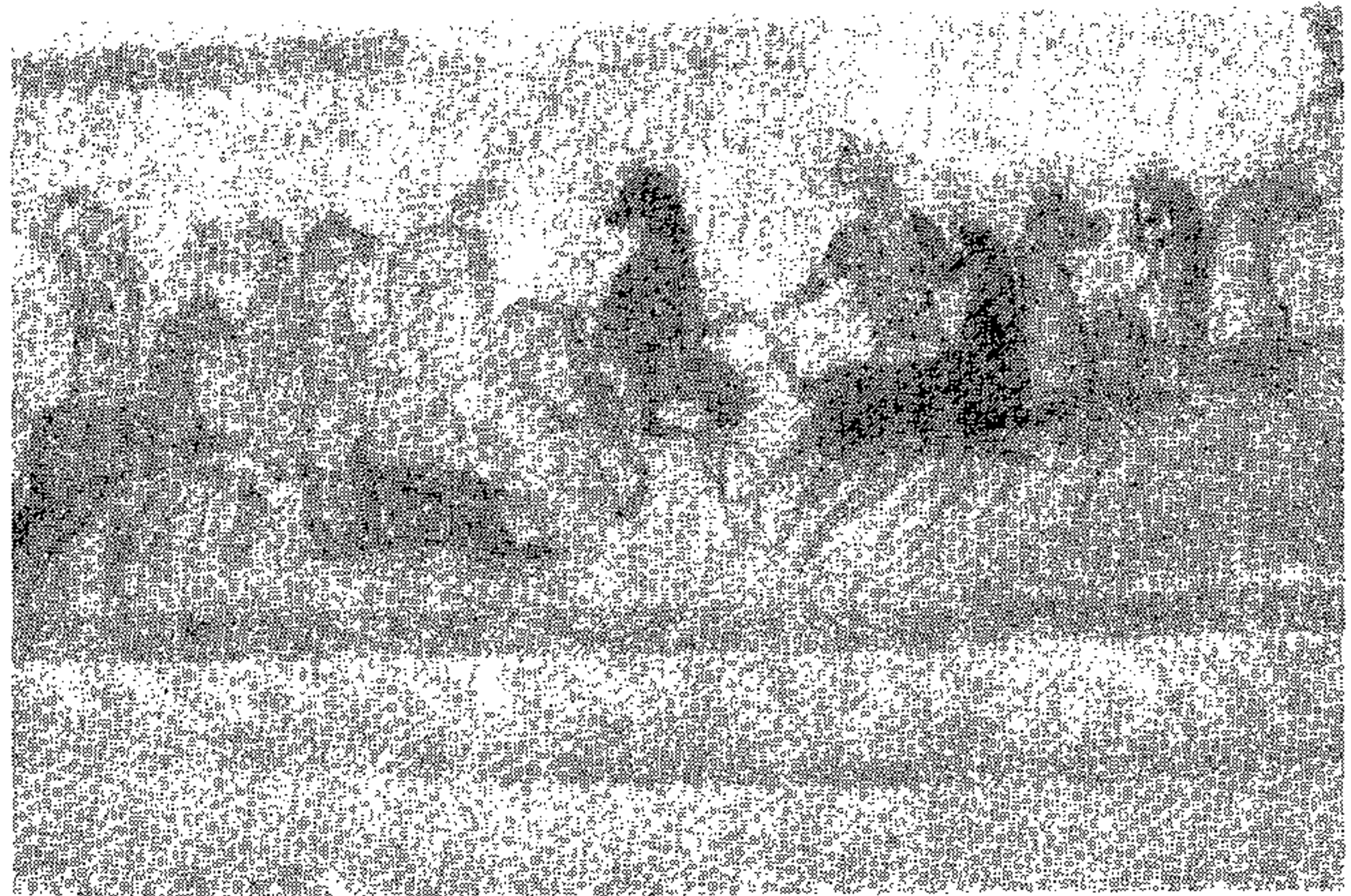


FIGURE 12.13 RACING FRESCO

The earliest explanation for some of the elements of the tomb has come from Clermont-Ganneau at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, who explained the reference to the lions through the religious affiliation of the deceased couple with the Mithraic cult. The phrase *quae lea iacet* was assumed to refer to Aelia's initiation into the Mithraic grade of the Lioness. The racing scene was taken to be a reference to Mithraic mythology according to which Mithra, having accomplished his earthly task, was taken up to the celestial sphere in the Sun's chariot. The Mithraic theory was subsequently contested on the basis that the association between Mithraism and a woman is not attested anywhere else in the Roman world, not even in the regular lists of grades. In fact, Campbell (1968: 316) points out that:

Mithraic asceticism, as it had developed in the third and fourth centuries under the influence of Neoplatonism, required at least a temporary repudiation of marriage ties with women as well as the exclusion of women from membership.

Cumont (1956a: 173) emphasizes that there is no mention of any priestess, a woman initiate or donations made by women in this cult. He suggests that Aelia Arisuth was merely an honorary member of the cult, much as women in the Eastern provinces were honorary magistrates without really fulfilling the function. Her initiation into the Mithraic grade of the Lioness would then be understood in this light. But a woman's honorary membership in an institution which specifically forbade the membership of women cannot be equated with an honorary municipal membership where no such formal prohibitions exist. It is quite evident that Aelia is the more important member of the tomb, rather than her husband, who also bears the title of 'lion', which hardly agrees with what we know about Mithraism. In addition, while the Mithraic cult assumed varying characteristics all over the Roman Empire, nothing about the imagery of the wall paintings and the inscriptions above the niches is traditionally Mithraic.

Romanelli in 1922 identified a number of Christian elements in the tomb paintings, for example the peacocks,



the roses and the vine leaves, and dismissed the reference to the lioness by pointing out that if it had not been for this one element (which no longer exists), no one would have thought of connecting the deceased with the cult of Mithra. He points out that candles held by the side figures (see Figure 7.24) are typical of Christian iconography, although they are normally depicted standing on the ground, and not held by individuals. The depiction of peacocks is another typical Christian motif, where the vine leaves and the birds are references to the garden of paradise. For the racing fresco Romanelli looks to the letters of St Paul, who, he claims, refers repeatedly to the races at the circus. In fact, Paul does not refer to the circus at all, although he does make four references to runners winning the race.<sup>195</sup> In addition Paul - who thinks that women should be seen and not heard - would not be a likely reference in this particular context. Even Romanelli, however, has to come to the conclusion that there are too many pagan elements in the tomb to warrant a Christian interpretation: apart from the lions, the initial invocation of *Dis Manibus Sacrum* is hardly Christian (although not entirely unknown, see for example Dunbabin (1978: 139 n.20)), and the *genii* are definitively pagan. The decorative elements of roses, grapes and peacocks are also not exclusively Christian. In fact there is not one clear and unambiguous Christian symbol in the whole tomb. Romanelli has no further explanation to offer but that this is a symbol of religious syncretism of some sort, pointing out that many of the Christian rituals were also a part of Mithraic ritual. Salvian's references to Vandal Carthage are also an indication that pagan and Christian beliefs and practices were not so distinct as the Church Fathers would have liked, since African Christians apparently found it quite normal to sacrifice both to Caelestis and to worship in the Christian church [*De Gub. Dei* 8.2]. Aurigemma (1960), too, concludes that the Mithraic reference is the result of religious syncretism and confusion of symbols in what is most probably a pagan tomb decorated in a spirit of pagan resistance to Christianity that was characteristic of this and later centuries.<sup>196</sup> Africa is specifically commented on by authors for the 'extraordinary mix of cultural influences that went into the construction of commemorative funerary architecture and literature' (Davies 1999: 151). Some additional points can be added to this general conclusion which would also take into account the fact that Aelia, as a woman, is the more prominent figure of the two.

Firstly, in the Roman African context the lioness and lion symbols are not unique to Mithraism. In the Maghreb the goddess Cybele, the Great Mother, like Ashtart, Tanit and Caelestis, was often depicted with the lion and sometimes identified with it: 'Au Maghreb, on vénérât aussi la déesse cappadocienne Mâ, identifiée à Bellone, don't l'image est gravée sur une paroi rocheuse dans la région d'Uzappa; un culte était également adressé à la Grande Mère de l'Ida, déesse phrygienne qui, tout comme Ashtart, Tanit et Caelestis, avait une prédilection pour le lion' (Decret and Fantar 1981: 273). Desanges (1981: 437) mentions that animals such as the bull, the lion and the ram symbolized the power to procreate and were worshipped by the Africans for this reason.<sup>197</sup> Cybele was the goddess of the dead and 'graves consecrated to her often bear the image of the lion, her substitute' (Cumont 1959: 36). In her mystery cult the deceased went down to the infernal regions and the woman became another Cybele, the man became another Attis (her consort). This could possibly explain the reference to the 'Lion or lioness who lies here' more fully. Both men and women could be priests in her cult,

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<sup>195</sup> There are four references to races in Paul's letters - all foot races run by athletes [*1 Corinthians* 9.23-27; *Philippians* 3.12-14; *1 Timothy* 6.12; *2 Timothy* 2.5]

<sup>196</sup> See Appendix B.

<sup>197</sup> A lion and a lioness are for example illustrated from the tomb of Kbor Roumia (Desanges 1981: 439, plate 17.1)



and the early primitive rituals of castration seem to have fallen away by the 2<sup>nd</sup> century AD under Roman influence. In Africa the majority of inscriptions mentioning priesthoods of the 'divine mother' or Magna Mater come from Tripolitania, especially Sabratha ('Sacerdoti Matris Deum') (Vermaseren 1986: 20-25). As a fertility goddess Cybele is often depicted with corn and grapes and further images of plenty. Syncretism with the worship of Dionysus influenced funerary depictions to represent the joys beyond the grave, a feast in the Elysian fields (Cumont 1959: 37) - this certainly seems to be the setting of Aelius Magnus surrounded by vines, grapes and baskets of fruit. References to doves, peacocks and other birds are quite common in the Earth Mother cults.<sup>198</sup>

Indigenous African influences definitely had some impact on the imported cults such as that of Cybele, although it is difficult to determine exactly to what extent. Tanit - Juno Caelestis had some influence, as discussed above. We do know that the lion and lioness were powerful symbols of procreative power for the indigenous Africans, together with the bull and the ram, and was worshipped for this reason. The lion-headed goddess, Tanit, is typically African. As mentioned above, Libyan religion was similar to that of the Egyptians in their liking for zoomorphic deities.<sup>199</sup>

Oriental influence may also be present in the orientation of the graves. No attention has been paid to their alignment on a West-East axis in which all the deceased face the rising sun, as indicated by the accompanying drawing by Romanelli. Under the influence of astral immortality Attis ended by becoming a solar god, and from then on Cybele was united to the souls she had saved in the celestial heavens. This could explain the positioning of the four tombs, which all show the heads pointing west and facing east in the direction of the rising sun.<sup>200</sup>

As for Aelia herself, we have already seen another turbaned woman in the Boglio stele illustrated in Figure 12.2 dated to the 3<sup>rd</sup> century AD, as well as an example of a Christian woman wearing this form of head dress (Figure 7.27). In both these cases (one assisting sacrifice and the other in the orant posture) the women are connected with religion, therefore it seems likely that this was also the meaning of the dress worn by Aelia Arisuth.<sup>201</sup>

Neither the Mithraic nor the Christian theory for the chariot race is satisfying nor do they explain why a racing

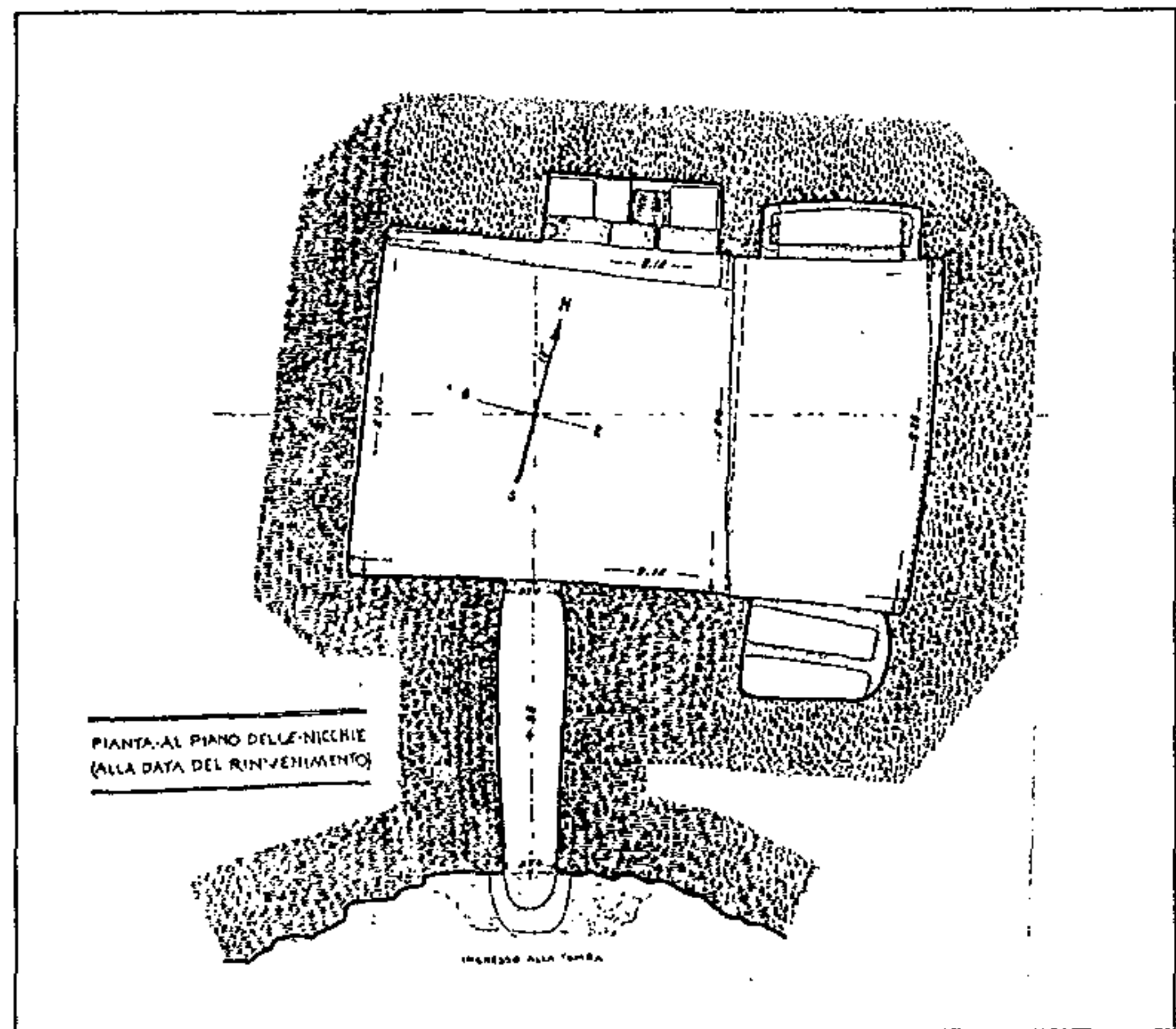


FIGURE 12.14 ROMANELLI'S SKETCH OF THE TOMB

<sup>198</sup> A limestone pediment from Africa Proconsularis, for example, shows Cybele and her lion flanked by two peacocks (Vermaseren 1987: figure 116).

<sup>199</sup> See pp. 283-284.

<sup>200</sup> A marble relief found near Thibilis shows Cybele riding the lion with the bust of Sol in a radiate crown in the upper left corner and a bird on a support in the right upper corner (illustrated in Vermaseren 1987: 137).

<sup>201</sup> Here also D'Ambra's comments on the turban hairstyle and its possible religious origin, mentioned in Chapter 7, p. 155, are pertinent.



scene in full and realistic detail is chosen to embody either symbolism. While racing scenes do sometimes decorate Roman sarcophagi, these do not belong to women (Fournet-Pilipenko 1961/62). There seems to be no obvious connection between the racing scene and the portrait of Aelia Arisuth above. On the other hand, the racing scene bears a remarkable resemblance to mosaics found in Roman Africa and Spain, collected in Vermaseren (1986), of which a few examples are reproduced here.



FIGURE 12.15 A MOSAIC PAVEMENT FROM GERUNDA IN SPAIN. ON THE *SPINA* CYBELE RIDES A LION TO THE LEFT

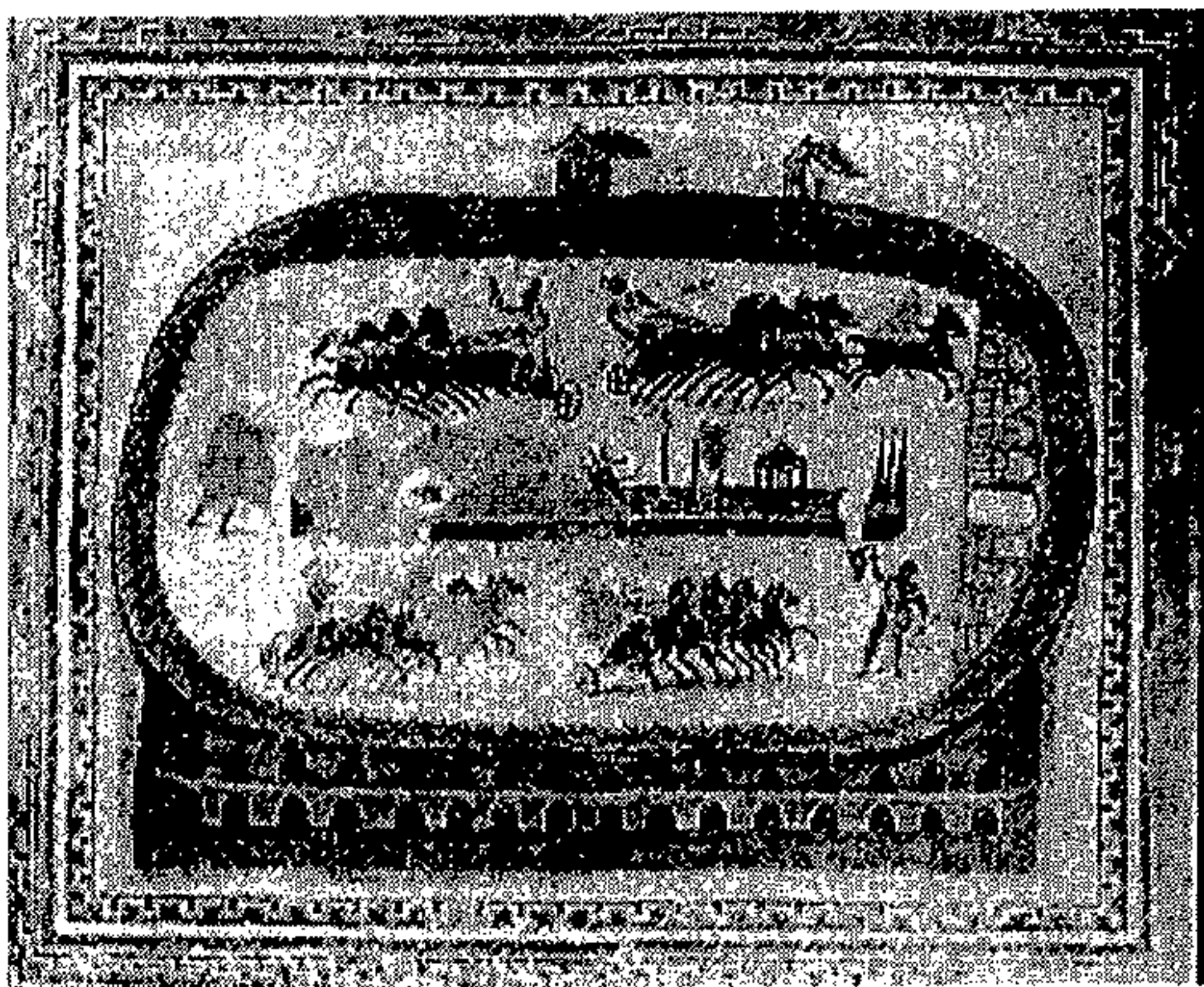


FIGURE 12.16 MOSAIC PAVEMENT FROM CARTHAGE.  
ON THE *SPINA*, CYBELE ON LION MOVING LEFT

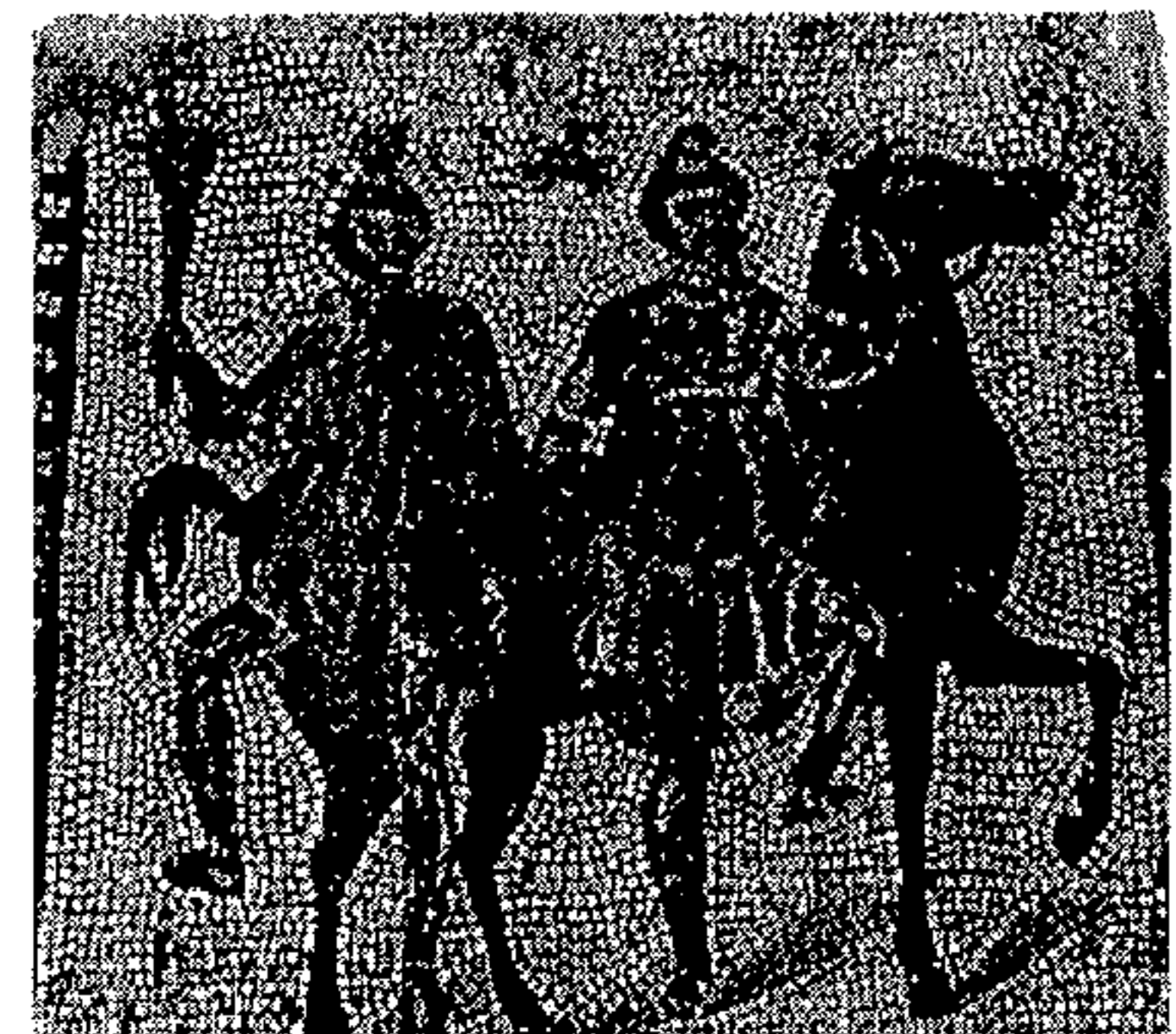


FIGURE 12.17 BLACK RACEHORSE NAMED  
HILARINUS/HILARUS BEHIND TWO  
DANCING MEN IN PHRYGIAN DRESS

Like the fresco from Aelia's tomb, these scenes are also realistically and dramatically worked out. In the centre of each of the mosaics is the *spina*, where Cybele is shown riding a lion to the left. The African mosaic (Figure 12.16) has been dated by Charles-Picard (1959: 141) to the end of the 3<sup>rd</sup> century, although Dunbabin (1978: 146) dates it to the 4<sup>th</sup> century AD, approximately in the period of the tomb at Gargàresch. Figure 12.17 shows



two figures in Phrygian caps - clearly an Eastern connection - with a black horse. The name of the horse, Hilarinus or Hilarus, is a clear reference to the festival which celebrated the resurrection of Attis, the Hilaria. It does seem possible, therefore, that there is some connection between chariot races and Cybele in the popular imagination. If religious syncretism is granted, the tomb surely shows many elements which could connect it to the worship of the Magna Mater and related fertility cults in Roman Africa, and the racing scene, like the other religious symbols in the tomb, and including Aelia's dominant status, can be explained by references to the cult of Cybele.

### **CONCLUSIONS ON PAGAN WOMEN'S PRIESTHOODS AND *LIBERALITAS* IN ROMAN AFRICA**

In total we have 154 inscriptions which mention women as priestesses, prophetesses or members of religious colleges. It is noticeable that women more often occupied priesthoods devoted to cults of female divinities like the Cereres or sometimes even to female members of the imperial family, clearly linked to the fact that these figures symbolized key areas of women's lives such as marriage and childbirth. As priestesses women only played a significant role (in terms of numbers) in two cults: that of the Cereres and the flamine. In the other cults the evidence for women in prominent or prestigious roles, if any, yields single digits per cult.

As is clearly shown by the Tables above and in Appendix A, geographically the preponderance of evidence for priestesses and benefactresses is centred on Africa Proconsularis,<sup>202</sup> which is to be expected since the type of evidence available to us is essentially Roman, and would naturally feature more strongly in the most Romanized province. A mere ten instances are found in the least Romanized province, Mauretania Tingitana. It is rather surprising to find that in this province five out of the nine instances of female priesthoods which can be dated occur in the 1<sup>st</sup> century AD, while for the rest of Roman Africa the majority of inscriptions are centred in the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> centuries AD, and only seven can securely be dated to the 1<sup>st</sup> century, with one from the later 3<sup>rd</sup> and possibly early 4<sup>th</sup> century (nr. 130). The concentration in Tingitana can perhaps be explained by a Roman élite settlement which was initially very small (which may also explain the number of very high offices for women), followed by increasing apathy and eventual abandonment of the province long before the rest. Influences from Spain, as discussed above, are also likely to have played a role here. For the rest of Roman Africa the concentration in the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> centuries is in concord with the findings by Jacques (1984: 724-725), who observes that the evidence for Roman African priesthoods and euergetism begins to taper off in the 3<sup>rd</sup> century.

#### **Cults other than the Imperial cult**

A high number of epitaphs makes up the majority of the evidence for all but the Imperial cult, and the inscriptions are for the most part private dedications. What is noteworthy here is that most of these inscriptions, even when erected by family members, seldom mention the list of virtues of *pudicitia*, *castitas*, *fides* and motherhood, associated with women in their private capacity. The epithet *pia* is mentioned most often, usually in the sense of *pia vixit*, which is as likely to have had a bearing on how a woman conducted herself as a priestess rather than her role as a dutiful wife, especially in cults which demanded chastity, like that of Ceres.

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<sup>202</sup> Though the evidence is not centred on any particular city or town (the apparent concentration in Thugga (see Appendix A) is the result of a number of inscriptions for particular individuals).



Very few inscriptions of these cults hint that women occupied official priesthoods in their cities. There are instances where women are honoured and receive some form of official acknowledgement, such as a *locus datus decreto decurionum*. (for example in nrs. 31 or 168), and there are clear instances where the priestesses were involved in cults which were official in a particular city (but possibly as members of colleges), for example at Ammaedara (Table II.ii). A clear example is that of Valeria Concessa of Bulla Regia (nr. 13), who was a *sacerdos publica Cererum* and was voted an honorary statue by the *ordo* while the cost of the base was paid by her two sons, for their *mater optima*. Not a single example exists among these cults of any *summa honoraria* or payments for office, or *pollicitationes* for the honour of having been elected to office. Some women donated substantial sums to the city as priestesses, for example Scantia Peregrina, priestess of Bellona (nr. 181), in what was clearly an official cult in the city of Caesarea, but no connection is made in the inscription to any municipal office as such. It appears that *liberalitas* as a Roman tradition was linked to cults with strong Roman roots, but which was also increasingly adopted by others, such as at Lepcis Magna, where a woman named Suphunibal, daughter of Annobal Ruso, though not connected to an official cult, dedicated a shrine to Ceres (nr. 40). There are also instances where women are involved in benefactions together with male members of their family, for example husband and wife. While it is clear that in some cases, like Cornelia Valentina Tucciana (nr. 160-164), husband and wife play an equal role in the benefactions, in other cases the name of the wife is added as something of an afterthought and it is debatable how much of a role she actually played, particularly if she had no priesthood (nrs. 45, 51, 78, 84, 88, 98, 149).

The cases of *liberalitas* by women or honours to women per cult can be summarized as follows:

- Filicinia Secura, priestess of the Capitol, together with her husband, makes a dedication in honour of the priesthood of their son [*ILAlg* I. 2146] (nr. 50).
- Pompeia Satria Fortunata and her husband, priests in the service of Cybele, donate an altar [*Vermaseren* 1986, 41] (nr. 125).
- Scantia Peregrina, priestess in the cult of Bellona, erects a temple at her own cost in Caesarea [*AE* 1902, 12] (nr. 181).
- A dedication is made by Sallustia Luperca, priestess of Ceres/the Cereres [*CIL* 1140] at Carthage (II.vi).
- A dedication is made to Ceres by Valeria Saturnina, priestess, and Valeria Maior, *flaminica* [*CIL* 1623] (nr. 65).
- Honorary statue erected to Valeria Concessa, *sacerdos publica Cererum*, at Bulla Regia; base paid for by sons [*CIL* 14472 = 10580] (nr. 13).
- Honorary statue erected to Cornelia Licinia, priestess of Ceres/the Cereres at Ammaedara; base paid for by children [*CIL* 11547 = 361] (nr. 7).
- Fabatia Polla Fabia Domitia Gelliola, *lampadifera* in the cult of Ceres and *patrona*, is honoured by freedman (nr. 73).

Status for priestesses in these cults was mixed. No women of the senatorial or equestrian order are recorded as priestesses of any of these cults, except in the case of the *lampadifera* (nr. 73), the wife of a man of consular rank, who is honoured as a *patrona piissima*. Quite a number of women were probably freedwomen or of native extraction, like Iulia Katullina (Table II.xviii) or Datia Fortunata (Table II.xix). Native origins are also demonstrated in a number of cases where names and cult affiliation are a strong indication, for example Aemilia



Amot Micar (Table II.ix) or Nonnia Primitiva, *sacerdos Cererum Punicarum* (Table II.xiv).

### The Imperial cult

In the flamine honorary inscriptions make up the majority of the instances (only eight out of sixty-eight are funerary). Honorary inscriptions even more singularly use the adjectives given to women in private life. According to a study done by Forbis<sup>203</sup> for Italian benefactresses, the vast majority of Italian inscriptions honouring such women (88%) use no epithets at all other than those used for men under the same circumstances, for example *ob merita, liberalitas*. This is in contrast to the cities of the East, where there is a blend of public and private terms used to describe benefactresses (Van Bremen 1996: 96-97) and where women are honoured for their ideal female virtues (for example chastity, modesty and/or devotion to their husbands) in the same context as their *liberalitas*. In the African provinces a number of honorary accolades to women include phrases like *matri optima/piissima* (nrs. 10, 184), *rarissima marita* (nr. 138) or other personal terms, but these are clearly family contexts, where family members contribute to the erection of the statue or base.<sup>204</sup> Official inscriptions omit these terms altogether and appear therefore to relate more closely to the Italian type than to that of the Near East.

A special status is indicated in the case of the *flaminicae*, since it is only here that we have evidence for women paying the *summa honoraria* and the *pollicitationes* which for men were related to political office. It is clear that it is only in the flamine that women held positions similar to that of men. The flamine was also the cult in which women are most closely and often explicitly associated with men who occupied political office. For some women the flamine was a form of upward social mobility, as in the case of a number of women who clearly had local names, for example Fabia Bira, the daughter of Izelta [*AE* 1916, 43; *ILA* 630; *ILM* 129], or in the case of Licinia Prisca, freedwoman of M. Licinius Rufus, patron of Thugga (nrs. 100-102). Such ambitions may also be indicated in other cases where further information on the benefactress and her family are lacking, for example at Lepcis Magna, where Suphunibal, the daughter of Annobal Ruso, built a shrine to Ceres Augusta in the 1<sup>st</sup> century AD (nr. 40).

### A general assessment of patronage and *liberalitas* by the women of Roman Africa:

#### (i) position of the benefactor

From the evidence collected above two facts are immediately apparent. Firstly that women's benefactions, where a cult affiliation is indicated, are always connected to official cults, not local 'barbarian' ones or oriental cults, and that the majority of benefactions are related to their role in the imperial cult. Even where women played a numerically prominent role as priestesses, as in the case of the cult of the Cereres, this was not automatically linked to patronage, even where the cult of Ceres was an official municipal cult in that city. Secondly, a point related to the first, is that euergetism was exercised for the most part by women of at least local élite status. This brings us to the point made by MacMullen (1980: 214) mentioned at the beginning of

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<sup>203</sup> FORBIS (1990): 'Women's public image in Italian honorary inscriptions'.

<sup>204</sup> Women honouring men can also include a number of personal virtues, as in nr. 1: Sextia Peducaea's son is *pius, optimus, sanctissimus, dignissimus*.



this chapter.<sup>205</sup> His observations about the lack of independent female action in the East are at least partly valid for Roman Africa. It is certainly true that in the majority of cases female priestesses of prominence were the daughters or wives of men who were prominent citizens in local or provincial politics, as can be seen from the Table in Appendix A. In two certain cases we know that women's priesthoods were awarded as a form of honour to a male benefactor, and the priesthood was honorific only: at Cillium, Flavia Libera pays for a statue to her stepdaughter, Flavia Pacata, a *flaminica perpetua* of the colony of Thelepte, a priesthood which she occupied at (or even before) the age of fifteen (nr. 19). In her case the priesthood was probably a compliment to her father, Titus Flavius Secundus, also a *flamen perpetuus* at Cillium. In another instance we are told that Gallia Optata was honoured with a flamine for her husband's generosity towards the town (nr. 53), and this may also be linked to the instances where *summa honoraria* and *pollicitationes* in honour of female priesthoods are paid for by male relatives (nrs. 60, 70, 72). Such instances need not necessarily be gender-determined, however. In another case, a son is honoured at Thuburbo Maius for his mother's munificence (nr. 86). In other instances one receives the distinct impression, where men honour female relatives, that they are embracing the opportunity to give the full list of their own titles and offices (for example nr. 41).

The implication of MacMullen's observation, however, is that only in the case of women's priesthoods were offices awarded on the basis of the status of male relatives, when in fact, taking their role against the background of honours for men, it is clear that in Roman(ized) political society, family connections for men were also paramount in determining access to further power, and although of course there were cases where individuals without family backing gained membership of the *ordo*, this was not the norm. It is certainly true that women acted as members of families rather than as independent individuals, but so did men. Women, as men, were concerned to continue family traditions.<sup>206</sup>

By its very nature it was a prerequisite that those elected to priestly or other municipal offices be persons of means. Priesthoods in the major cults were usually awarded to those who already had the financial resources to shoulder cultic responsibilities. Women chosen as priestesses were commonly from the urban élite, although this does not limit them to any particular social order (we have at least one example of a freedwoman, Licinia Prisca, and other examples of women of non-Roman stock). In this sense therefore, female benefactors, unlike *patronae municipii*, could come from any order.

## (ii) limitations on status

But there were of course limitations to women's official role even in the imperial cult. In one example from Cirta (nr. 133), the dedication of a shrine to the deified Livia was made by the proconsul, Q. Marcius Barea, although the costs were paid for by the *flaminica* of her cult, as in a number of other cases where male members of the local élite paid for the erection of a building while the dedication was made by an imperial official (Rives 1995: 81). Nor was it the cult which determined the involvement of a person of status in its dedication, although final approval of some official body or representative was required in official public cults. It seems that it was the nature of the building (Rives 1995: 83). The proconsul or any other high official's blessing was sought

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<sup>205</sup> See p. 263.

<sup>206</sup> In nr. 57 a woman of equestrian family, Iulia, actually expresses that her benefactions are *imitata parentes maioresque*.



because of his power and prestige, and not because of his religious authority.<sup>207</sup>

**(iii) independent *liberalitas***

There are a number of instances in which women were included in family benefactions, for example at Lambaesis, where a temple to Isis and Sarapis was donated by Lucius Mattucius Fuscus, his wife Volteia Cornificia and their daughter Mattucia Fuscina (nr. 144). Mattucius was a *legatus propraetor*, but his wife and daughter contributed unofficially. Only a few illustrative examples of this type of collective benefaction have been included in Appendix A (nrs. 88, 93, 110). In other cases women were fulfilling testamentary obligations (nrs. 39, 51, 54, 85, 96). In one case at Seressitanum (nr. 64) for example, a triumphal arch was promised by C. Memmius Felix Armenianus, while the costs were born by his heirs, his mother and his sister. The dedication was accompanied by the usual *sportulae*, *epulum* and oil for the athletes in the games. The structure was surmounted by a quadriga at the public expense. Women, like men, were responsible for promises made by deceased family if they were the heirs [*Dig.* 50.12.6.2 (Ulpian)].<sup>208</sup>

**(iv) types of benefactions**

Women's *liberalitas* - temples, additions to temples, statues, *sportulae* and other donations to various groups proves to be no different in type to that exercised by men in the same position.<sup>209</sup> Large scale expenditure such as theatres, temples and other buildings such as *macella* is indicated in a number of examples from Africa Proconsularis, while Numidia and the Mauretaniae offer a far smaller sample (nrs. 132, 136(?), 142 and 183) for women acting on their own in this type of benefaction. The highest known expenditure is that of Annia Aelia Restituta (nrs. 15 and 16) of HS 400 000 for a theatre, which compares well with the donations made by male benefactors from Africa recorded by Duncan-Jones (1974: 90-93), who records only three instances of larger amounts spent on buildings: HS 600 000 for a temple at Lambaesis, 600 000 for an unclassified building at Caputamsaga in Numidia, and HS 500 000 for the rebuilding of the *proscenium* and *scaenae frons* of a theatre at Lepcis Magna. The magnitude of Aelia Restituta's *liberalitas* is indicated by the fact that five statues were voted in her honour. No other recorded sum for women's benefactions in Africa approaches this amount, although expenses in some cases could not have been small. Calpurnia Honesta (nrs. 35 and 36) built the bigger *exedra* in the old forum of Lepcis Magna, a *sacellum* in honour of Antoninus Pius, in 153 AD. The structure is of the temple-*exedra* type common in public places and similar to the temple to Augusta Ceres in the *cavea* of the theatre, or the temple of the oldest basilica in Sabratha (Bandinelli *et al* 1966: 86). According to Garnsey (1971: 121 n.32) an *exedra* was a rare gift, one also donated by the *pontifex* Claudius Modestus [*CIL* 20144] at Cuicul in Numidia, about AD 160. Costs for this type of building are not established, but were certainly not inconsiderable.<sup>210</sup> A large sum was also donated in the case of Asicia Victoria, who paid HS 100 000 on the occasion of her daughter's flamine (nrs. 104-107) at Thugga towards the close of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century.

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<sup>207</sup> Africa Proconsularis was also more conducive to women's euergetism because in Numidia and the Mauretaniae officials predominated as patrons and benefactors (Warmington 1954: 47).

<sup>208</sup> In other instances men carried out the promises made by deceased female relatives, for example in nrs. 57, 59, 67, 111, 115.

<sup>209</sup> For benefactions on being awarded a priesthood in general, see 'Les dons *ob honorem* en Afrique du nord' in JACQUES (1984): *Le privilège de liberté. Politique impériale et autonomie municipale dans les cités de l'Occident romain (161-244), 722-757*.

<sup>210</sup> An *exhedra* is also built at Thugga by a priest of Caelestis [*CIL* 26474].



For these benefactions women were duly honoured with priesthoods, statues and honourable mention. Aside from Aelia Restituta mentioned above, women are singularly honoured in two other cases, at Volubilis by a funeral at public cost (nr.192) (although her husband is also honoured here), and at Thugga where the town (rather than the heirs) supplemented the sum donated by Asicia Victoria for bronze balustrades for the rostra (nr. 107).

## CHRISTIAN WOMEN IN ROMAN AFRICA

In Chapter 10 the avenues open to women to maintain an active role in public life within the Christian social framework were briefly examined. It serves to review within the next few pages exactly and concretely how women made use of these avenues within the African context, and how this reflected on family honour and renown, if at all.

### **Piety, wealth and power**

One wealthy and influential Christian woman in the African context has already been mentioned, Augustine's patroness at the *fundus* Thogonoetensis. Augustine leaves us in no doubt that she had authority in the area. Wealth was still one of the means by which women could wield a certain power, even in the Christian context which denied women anything but the most humble role in the Church hierarchy. Women could pull strings even if they could not occupy positions in the Church. In one case it was the rich Pompeiana, the wife of the *fisci advocatus*, who was able to finance the transportation of the body of Maximianus, martyred at Theveste in 295, and by influence to procure a burial place for it close to the tomb of Cyprian [*Acta Max. Mart.*, 3] (Musurillo 1972: 37). Other women had influence in this era based on moral authority, such as saints or because of prophetic gifts.<sup>211</sup> Perpetua had authority because of her social standing, but also (over her group of fellow Christians) because of her dreams. Moral authority could be advantaged by wealth and other circumstances. Many of these women had chosen the path of continence, and more often than not they were not virgin girls but mothers who had run their own households and who may even have been wealthy in their own right. Some women, as we have seen, rose to prominence through piety and martyrdom. For the Roman authorities essentially the unpalatable message concerning female Christian martyrs was that not only were Christians unwilling to follow the dictates of the emperor, but women, essentially the submissive sex, were rebelling against male authority and the emperor. Women such as Crispina (executed on 5 December 304), who refused to sacrifice to the gods at Thagura, or Perpetua, refusing to obey the authority of either *pater* or *patria*. In the Christian context, their behaviour was held up as exemplary, and their images were commemorated in iconic format, as can be seen in Figure 13.2 in the following chapter. It was this independence coupled with wealth which also occasionally placed them in a controversial position in their dealings with the Church. Some women used their wealth to impinge on the local church as benefactresses in the manner which had been normal in pagan Roman and also Jewish circles (Brown 1988: 150).<sup>212</sup> On occasion women had been officially appointed

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<sup>211</sup> Compare for example the women of Corinth in Paul's community, *1 Corinthians* 11: 2-16. See KRAEMER (1992): *Her share of the blessings*, 146, for general discussion.

<sup>212</sup> BROOTEN (1982): *Women leaders in the ancient Synagogue*, 157-165, has shown that the titles accorded to women in the synagogues were not purely honorific, or evidence for priestly family connections, but in fact testified to the active presence of women leaders in the



as deaconesses because they had influence in terms of money, and their houses were sometimes used for meetings of the Christian communities, but deaconesses soon lost most of the little authority they had had in the Church.<sup>213</sup> The remaining problem for the Church was how to gain from wealthy benefactresses but to limit interference and the flouting of authority. Although public building waned in the 3<sup>rd</sup> century AD, Church building expanded (Salisbury 1997: 159) as more and more wealthy African Christians joined the community and donated generously to its coffers. Women could also be donors and founders. Helena, the mother of the emperor Constantine, was well known for her Christian foundations and benefactions - but she was also the last imperial woman to appear on a Roman medallion (Vermeule 2000: 26-27).<sup>214</sup> The Theodosian empresses 'created special imperial liturgies and used pilgrimages, charity, political patronage and asceticism to develop a distinctly political clientele' (McNamara 1987: 124), but henceforth it is only imperial women or the very rich who are mentioned in the sources as benefactresses. This does much to explain why we have no evidence for benefactions by Vandal Queens or Byzantine women in Africa.

Brown (1987: 279) emphasizes that the most demeaning aspect of patronage for the clergy was their 'perilous and ignominious' dependence on wealthy women, noting how this was effectively countered by two aspects: the fact that women's wealth could be 'safely' expended on the poor, who 'counted for nothing', and that women were also denied any public power or influence within the Church - attempts at such influence, Brown notes, gave rise to studiously nurtured scandal. The most infamous example of such a woman from the African context is Lucilla, who used her wealth and power not only to defy male authority, but also to interfere in a male domain. At this time orthodoxy had been imposed on the Christian world by Constantine, defining the 'right' views as opposed to 'heresies'. In Africa a number of bishops were angered about the forthcoming ordination of Caecilianus as bishop of Carthage on the grounds that he had been ordained by a *traditor* or traitor.<sup>215</sup> It was at this point that Lucilla entered the fray for reasons of her own. Lucilla was a wealthy Christian of senatorial rank resident in Carthage [Aug., *Contra Cresc.* 3.29]. She seems to have had her own ideas about religious matters, since she bestowed upon a holy relic a kiss, for which action she was reprimanded by the archdeacon of Carthage, Caecilianus. When a quarrel resulted, she bribed the opponents of Caecilianus to elect Maiorinus, a member of her household, to the bishopric of Carthage in the election in 311.<sup>216</sup> Clearly Maiorinus was no obstacle, since he was in her employ and power, and could be used as a pawn in her plan of action.<sup>217</sup> Her

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public religious life of the synagogues, particularly during the Hellenistic period.

<sup>213</sup> See Chapter 10. Even the impressive list of benefactions of Olympias in Constantinople, who was made deaconess at 30, gave her very little influence in Church affairs [*Vita Olympiae*, edited by E.A. Clark 1979: 123]. For the list of benefactions see ALEXANDRE (1992): 'Early Christian women', 441.

<sup>214</sup> In another example from Milan, a church was paved by the donation of the wife of Stilicho, Serena, who fulfilled a vow made for the safe return of her husband (Cameron 1993a: 126).

<sup>215</sup> See also Chapter 2, p. 40, on the origins of Donatism.

<sup>216</sup> Lucilla made a huge donation of alms for the poor, although the money actually never reached them. On this see BREMMER (1995): 'Pauper or patroness. The widow in the early Christian church', 40.

<sup>217</sup> From Antioch John Chrysostom issued the following:

Ὁ μὲν γὰρ θεῖος νόμος αὐτὰς ταύτης ἐξέωσε τῆς λειτουργίας ἐκεῖναι δὲ ἑαυτὰς εἰσωθεῖν βιάζονται· καὶ ἐπειδὴ οἱ ἑαυτῶν ἰσχύουσιν οὐδὲν δι' ἑτέρων πράττουσιν ἅπαντα· καὶ τοσαύτην περιβέβληται δύναμιν ὥς τῶν ἱερέων καὶ ἐγκρίνειν καὶ ἐκβάλλειν οὕς ἀνέθέλωσι

Divine law has excluded [women] from ecclesiastical office, yet still they try to push their way in, and since they can do nothing on their own, they rely on intermediaries for everything. They have acquired so much power that they can see to it that the priests they want are elected and others rejected ...

[*De Sac.* 3.9]



wealth assured her the support of the discontented opposition, and financed the conference of seventy bishops which met at Carthage to elect Maiorinus primate of Africa. It was through this action by Lucilla that the Donatist schism prospered.<sup>218</sup> Shaw (1992: 26) describes her as an 'absolutely critical historical actress, whose actions were a crucial element in what happened to the course of north African Christianity'. Our primary sources are, as might be expected, united in their condemnation of Lucilla.<sup>219</sup> The whole affair is related with the customary prejudice against female involvement in male affairs by the historian Optatus [*De Schism. Donat.* 1.16-19], who refers to her as *potens et factiosa femina* ('a powerful and seditious woman').

Female interference did not end with Lucilla. Augustine [*Ep.* 43.9.26 and *Ennar. In Ps.* 36.19] refers to another woman, who remains nameless except for the description 'a second Lucilla', and who was involved in Church matters relating to the formation of the Maximianists at the end of the 4<sup>th</sup> century. Augustine's relations with Melania and her husband were also fraught with tension between the power of wealth and the authority of the Church. Melania had religious backing and inherited connections which allowed her to control the lifestyle of her mother and her husband, disperse a great inheritance across Italy, Sicily, North Africa and Egypt, against the will of her relatives and probably against the interests of her city, and order her time in prayer and study as she herself chose (Clark 1984: 37). Once she had spent her fortune in Italy and Rome, she and members of her family went to Africa where she had vast estates at Thagaste, the produce of which was used to feed the poor. A large amount of her wealth also went to the church at Thagaste. It is against this background that Augustine relates the following from the Pinianus saga:<sup>220</sup>

*At ubi coepi subscribere, sancta Melania contradixit. Miratus sum quare tam sero, quasi promissionem illam et iurationem nos non subscribendo facere possemus infectam; sed tamen obtemperavi, ac sic remansit mea non plena subscriptio nec ultra nobis quisquam, ut subscriberemus, putavit instandum.*

But when I began to subscribe it, the saintly Melania opposed it. I wondered why she intervened at that late hour, as if my refraining from subscribing could invalidate his promise and oath; but yet I humoured her, and so my subscription remained unfinished, and no one thought of insisting any further on my subscribing. [*Ep.* 126.5]

Augustine explains his change of heart as a tolerant indulgence of a woman's whim, but it was surely Melania's wealth, influential family and obviously powerful personality which persuaded Augustine to accede to her request.<sup>221</sup>

But it seems that it was the dissident Christian sects which allowed women the greater opportunity to break away from accepted social codes. A more literal interpretation of the term 'rebellion' can be found in the activities of the Circumcellions, a group of men and women which arose in Numidia in the time of Augustine and persisted at least until the late 5<sup>th</sup> century (Baldwin 1962: 3). The Circumcellions arose from the villages in Numidia and Mauretania where, as we can deduce from the number of Donatist churches, the Donatist faction

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<sup>218</sup> On the death of Maiorinus the bishops elected Donatus, a bishop from Casae Nigrae in Numidia, as his successor. In 313 an official commission from Rome voted for Caecilianus against Donatus. Details of this whole episode can be found in FRENCH (1985): *The Donatist church: a movement of protest in Roman North Africa*, especially Chapters 1 and 11.

<sup>219</sup> The sources for this episode are Augustine, *Ep.* 43; *Contra Cresc.* 3.29.33; *De Unit. Eccl.* 25 (73); Jerome, *Ep.* 133.4 (a.414). Compare for example the reaction of earlier Roman authors to similar female actions discussed in BAUMAN (1992): *Women and politics in ancient Rome*.

<sup>220</sup> The basic controversy has already been mentioned earlier in Chapter 11 (p. 241).

<sup>221</sup> For a general view of male Church authorities' distrust of wealthy women, see BREMMER (1995): 'Pauper or patroness. The widow in the early Christian church', 43-49.



was very strong.<sup>222</sup> Frend (1978: 471) describes them as 'religious fanatics seeking martyrdom'. They haunted the shrines of martyrs, which, to judge from the silos and storage jars which have been discovered there and in rustic churches, served their revolutionary activities. Their attacks against the rich and the landowners are related by both Optatus of Milevis and Augustine (Frend 1978: 471-2), whom we may regard as contemporary but biased sources - both were Catholic and supporters of the landed aristocracy.<sup>223</sup> Augustine emphasizes the peasant origin of the Circumcellions [*Contra Gaud.* 1.28.32] and their destructiveness [*Ep.* 29, 66, 91; *Ep.* 185.4.15]. Since there were also women in this group, Augustine uses this to imply licentious behaviour, for example in tales of groups of immoral and drunken men and women [*Aug., Ep.* 209.2; *Contra Ep. Parmen.* 2.3.6; 2.9.19]. Frend (1985: 174-175) rejects Augustine's interpretation and explains their drinking and dancing as essentially ritualistic. Some of the women were called *sanctimoniales* or 'women dedicated to chastity', whose presence, as Baldwin (1962: 9) notes, would presumably have discouraged such licentious pleasures. The Circumcellions had a strong militaristic streak. Optatus [*De Schism. Don.* 3.4] tells us that the leaders of the Circumcellions were called *duces sanctorum*, 'captains of the saints', and they carried weapons [*Aug., Contra Ep. Parm.* 1.11.17]. They targeted the rich, moneylenders and creditors along the roads, although there is no specific mention of women taking part in these activities, and doubtlessly, if they had, our sources would have made mention of it. Nevertheless both men and women roamed the countryside in contravention of the Constantinian laws (Baldwin 1962: 5), and the women no doubt led a lifestyle entirely different from that of their Roman(ized) and orthodox countrywomen.

Women in other Christian sects also appear to have had more freedom in both a social and a cultic sense than in orthodox Christian circles. According to Tertullian women converts were prevalent in certain circles:<sup>224</sup>

*Ipsae mulieres haereticæ, quam procaces! quæ audeant docere, contendere, exorcismos agere, curationes repromittere forsitan et tingere.*

The very women of these heretics, how wanton they are! For they are bold enough to teach, to dispute, to enact exorcisms, to undertake cures - it may even be to baptize [De Praescr. Haer. 41.5]

Tertullian also mentions one of the women, Philumene, by name [6.6.30], but she is not heard of again. It is possible that the authority given to Mary in gnostic literature (for example the *Gospel of Mary*) was reflected in the social reality of gnostic communities.<sup>225</sup> We can possibly deduce something about women's roles in other sects from Tertullian's writings in which he upholds Paul's word on female teaching [*De Virg. Vel.* 9]. Tertullian's disapproval is based on his belief that women had taken the story of Thecla in the *Apocryphal Acts* as an authorization of their activities. Tertullian denied the validity of Paul's influence in the *Apocryphal Acts* by pointing out that this same apostle was the one who commanded women's silence, and that failure to observe

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<sup>222</sup> Donatism was popular in non-Romanized areas (especially Numidia and Mauretania), Catholicism in cities and towns, particularly in Africa Proconsularis and Byzacena. We may regard the Circumcellion rebellion as both social (repressive Constantinian legislation tied *coloni* to the soil and Catholic landowners were forcibly converting them to their own creed) as well as religious (they were co-opted by the Donatist faction) (Baldwin 1962: 5-7).

<sup>223</sup> For some cautionary comments on the sources and their orthodox Catholic bias, see BALDWIN (1962): 'Peasant revolt in Africa in the Later Roman Empire'.

<sup>224</sup> Irenaeus [*Adv. Haer.* 1.13.7], also orthodox, likewise expressed his dismay that women were attracted to groups where they were able to serve the Church as men did. In some gnostic circles god was described in both masculine and feminine terms, with a corresponding description of humanity (Rossi 1991: 75), and it was therefore acceptable for women to preach, prophecy and celebrate the eucharist as male priests did. See also OTRANTO (1982): 'Note sul sacerdozio femminile nell' antichità in margine a una testimonianza di Gelasio I', 349-351, who attributes the rise of female presbyters in the West to the influence of the Greek and Byzantine traditions.

<sup>225</sup> This aspect is discussed by PAGELS (1976): 'What became of God the Mother? Conflicting images of God in Early Christianity'.



what is proper to each level in the Church hierarchy would lead to schisms. His vehemence in this issue leads Aspregen to think that the claim for women to perform these tasks did have a certain strength (1990: 111).<sup>226</sup> Tertullian himself became a Montanist late in his life, a movement which featured, besides Montanus himself, two prophetesses Maximilla and Priscilla, and upheld the ministry of women, but Tertullian continued to express his abhorrence of women as teachers and preachers [*De Virg. Vel.* 9].<sup>227</sup>

#### Asceticism, giving alms, teaching and caregiving:

Of course the majority of women behaved in a more acceptable fashion. In 413 Demetrias, a woman of wealthy and influential family which had fled to Africa in 410,<sup>228</sup> renounced her worldly prospects and took a vow of chastity. Demetrias' decision was enthusiastically received by Augustine [*Ep.* 150]. In his letter Augustine thanks Proba and Juliana, her grandmother and mother, for the *apophoretum* or gift which was given to commemorate Demetrias taking the veil. In this manner *liberalitas* continued to be practised, but towards the Church. Demetrias retired to her African estates with her mother and grandmother [Aug., *Ep.* 130].

Another avenue to attract or draw women's donations was to encourage their patronage of the poor. Through almsgiving and care of the sick some wealthy women even gained a degree of public status in cities across the Empire (Brown 1987: 279).<sup>229</sup> The role of the deaconess became essentially that of caregiver, since any other activities were strongly condemned, also in Roman Africa.<sup>230</sup>

*Quam enim fidei proximum videretur, ut is docendi et tinguendi daret feminae potestatem qui ne discere quidem constanter mulieri permisset? Taceant, inquit, et domi maritos suos consulant.*

Is it likely that the apostle Paul would have granted women the right to teach and to baptize after restricting a wife's right to educate herself? 'And if they will learn anything, let them ask their husbands at home'

[Tert., *De Bapt.* 17.4]

and conclusively:

*Non permittitur mulieri in ecclesia loqui, sed nec docere nec tinguere nec offerre nec ullius virilis muneris, nedum sacerdotalis officii sortem sibi vindicare.*

Women are not permitted to speak in church, much less to teach, bathe, make offerings or claim for themselves any of the functions that properly belong to men, most notably the sacerdotal ministry. [Tert., *De Virg. Vel.* 9.2]

It was not generally part of the Roman ideal for women to help others beyond her own family,<sup>231</sup> but under Christian influence this changed. Augustine in the *Confessiones* [9] commends his mother for having been a

<sup>226</sup> In *De Baptismo* Tertullian refers to the 'new beast', the woman who baptizes. The 'old beast' refers to the Gnostic Cainite sect who opposed baptism and against whom Tertullian speaks out at the beginning of the work (Aspregen 1990: 110-111).

<sup>227</sup> BARNES (1971): *Tertullian*, 46-47, proposes a date of AD207 for the conversion to Montanism, and that *De Virginibus Velandis* was written in 208/9.

<sup>228</sup> Demetrias was the daughter of Juliana and Olybrius, who was the son of Sextus Anicius Petronius Probus, consul in 371 and four times praetorian prefect. Some of the possessions of her family fell into the hands of Heraclian when they landed in Africa.

<sup>229</sup> BROWN (1987): *Late Antiquity*, also emphasizes how unusual such status was in the male-dominated public life of the Late Empire.

<sup>230</sup> On this aspect see also OTRANTO (1982): 'Note sul sacerdozio femminile nell' antichità in margine a una testimonianza di Gelasio 1', 342-343.

<sup>231</sup> Although it is attested in one 1<sup>st</sup> century Roman African inscription (my emphases):

CONSTANTINE (CIRTA)

D(IS) M(ANIBUS) | GEMINIA INGE | NUA UNIVIRA CONSE | RVATRIX DULCISSIMA | MATER OMNIUM | HOMINUM  
PARENS OBNI | BUS SUBVENIES (sic) INNOCE | NS CASTISSIMA PRAESTA | NS RARISSIMA. V(IXIT) A(NNIS) LXXXI. |  
TRISTEM FECIT NEMINE(M). | O(SSA) V(OLO) B(ENE) Q(UIESCANT).

Consecrated to the departed. Geminia Ingenua, a woman of one husband, gentle guardian, mother of all men, flying to assist all like a parent. Innocent, most chaste and of outstanding rarity, she lived 81 years. She caused no one grief. May her bones rest in peace.

[CIL 7384; ILALG II 1185]



mother to all (... *ita curam gessit, quais omnes genuisset...*), and the role of the Christian woman as the caregiver for the poor became a convention contained in part in the role of deaconess. It was thought to be particularly appropriate for women, since Christian women could interact with pagan families (as wives, servants, nurses) without being tainted as a man would be [Tert., *Ad Uxor.* 2.4.2 and *De Pudic.* 22.1]. Commodian addresses mainly men in his *Instructiones*, but when it comes to visiting a sick woman, he advises:

*Similiterque soror si paupera lecto decumbet, incipiant vestrae matronae victualia ferre.*

And similarly, if your poor sister lies upon a sick-bed, let your matrons begin to bear her victuals.

[*Instruct.* 71; *CSEL* 30]

But, as Brown (1988: 150) observes, 'Passing around the houses continent adult women as widows enjoyed some of the enviable mobility associated with the apostolic calling [1 *Timothy* 5.123]'. A number of famous women also performed this task as nurse and healer. Melania the Younger [*Vita Mel.* 61] entered the medical profession and, as part of the hagiographical tradition, saved a woman whose dead baby could not be delivered even by embryotomy by untying her hair and her belt, and laying it on her. Another miraculous cure was affected through the mother of Megetia of Carthage, when her daughter's child had died in the womb. Megetia had dislocated her jaw by excessive vomiting while pregnant and, unable to eat, was wasting away. But by her mother's nursing and her faith (and the help of St Stephen), she was saved from death (Brown 1981: 44).<sup>232</sup>

### The role of the confessor

The Roman African tradition of 'confessors' mentioned above<sup>233</sup> also had women practitioners, such as Dagila, the wife of one of the butlers of the Vandal ruler Geisereric, whom Victor Vitensis describes as a 'noble and elegant woman' (*matrona nobilis ac delicata*) [*Hist. Persec.* 3.33].<sup>234</sup> Victor also mentions that Dagila had been a prominent confessor on many occasions (*multotiens iam confessor extiterat*).<sup>235</sup> Not many of these confessors are known to us by name, since our sources usually refer to them collectively, and also because they are not recorded in the lists of martyrs who were celebrated on certain days by the Church because they were not, ultimately, martyred [Cypr., *De Eccl. Cath. Unit.* 14; *Ep.* 55.17; 58.3]. Diesner (1962: 111) comments on the women mentioned by Victor: 'Die Frauen scheinen auch zuweilen neben ihren Kindern als Confessoren und Märtyrer besonders widerstandsfähig gewesen zu sein', but it is of course an element of hagiography that those seen as traditionally weak are made strong by their faith.

### Monasteries

Augustine's sister (who is never named) became the head of a women's convent near Hippo on being widowed [*Ep.* 211 and the *Vita Aug.* 26.1], as did also his niece [*Vita Aug.* 26.1]. One of Augustine's letters is addressed to Felicitas, the prioress at the nunnery which Augustine's sister had founded. The development of monasticism among women in Africa was probably the result of Augustine's efforts and that of his family, since while Tertullian and Cyprian praise virgins and widows dedicated to religion, we are first told of monastic life in

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<sup>232</sup> Recorded in the *Miracles of St Stephen*, *PL* 41, 843-9.

<sup>233</sup> See above p. 233.

<sup>234</sup> It is not certain whether 'Dagila' is actually the name of the woman or that of her husband (Diesner 1962: 111).

<sup>235</sup> A general discussion on Victor's treatment of the subject can be found in DIESNER (1962): 'Sklaven und Verbannte, Märtyrer und Confessoren bei Victor Vitensis'.



Africa by the Council of Carthage held in 397. Possidius also notes that when Augustine died he left 'a sufficient body of clergy and monasteries of both men and women' [*Vita Aug.* 31].<sup>236</sup> Melania the Younger established a women's religious community in Africa, 'inhabited by ... 130 virgins' [*Vita Mel.* 22], while another which she and her husband founded together was occupied by eight holy men. This was probably funded this from the sale of her and her husband's properties in Africa, and may even have been located on her own estates at Thagaste where the *Vita* tells us there were two bishops, Catholic and Donatist. We know from the *Vita Fulgentii* that wealthy Catholics were founding monasteries on their land (Frend 1978: 482). Victor Vitensis mentions another women's monastery founded in Thabraca in the 5<sup>th</sup> century [*Hist. Persec.* 58].

## CONCLUSION

It is clear from the evidence above that only in the case of the flamine were women allowed into the circle of benefactions and honours which were generally occupied by men of the local élite. While the evidence for *flaminicae* seems considerable compared to other female priesthoods, it was still a small proportion of the total flamine. Clearly wealth and family connections were important for women as well as for men in determining candidates for office. In the Christian African environment, on the other hand, women's opportunities were circumscribed by the Church and as this body became more and more institutionalized, and a greater distinction arose between clergy and laity, the position of women became less prominent and remained informal. Again wealth and connections were the deciding factors in giving women influence, also in the case of ascetics and saints, although other alternatives were presented, such as withdrawal from society to monastic life or subscribing to alternative codes of behaviour in heretic sects.

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<sup>236</sup> The *Historia Lausiaca* of Palladius has countless stories of women dedicating themselves to monastic life, discussed in detail in 'Asceticism and monastic life among women', Chapter 2 of SMITH's *The way of the mystics* (1978).





## CHAPTER 13

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# EXPLAINING WOMEN'S PUBLIC PROFILE IN ROMAN AFRICA

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In this last chapter but one we return briefly to a statement Livy puts in the mouth of the tribune L. Valerius in 195 BC and quoted earlier in this work:<sup>1</sup>

*Non magistratus nec sacerdotia nec triumphi nec insignia nec dona aut spolia bellica iis contingere possunt; munditiae et ornatus et cultus, haec feminarum insignia sunt.*

No offices, no priesthoods, no triumphs, no decorations, no gifts, no spoils of war can come to them [women]; elegance of appearance, adornment, apparel - these are the women's badges of honour. [34.7.8-9]

In Rome itself changes redefining this rigorous segregation between male and female badges of honour had taken place by the end of the 1<sup>st</sup> century AD, and certainly in the provinces many boundaries had been relaxed. Over the entire empire women were active in the communities as priestesses, patronesses and benefactors, executing social and religious responsibilities in both the pagan and the Christian context, for which they were duly honoured. What sort of return did women get on their investment? For men the rewards of patronage are clear - honours and upward mobility. What benefits accrued to female benefactors? It is Kraemer's assumption (1992: 85) that 'Although these people [priestesses from élite groups] undoubtedly had considerable prestige and influence before they assumed these offices, it also seems likely that they garnered additional power and social position from their performance of these cultic offices; otherwise it seems difficult to understand why they would have undertaken the enormous expense involved'. This is however a rather simplistic view of the complex influences on female civic roles. The aim of this chapter is to examine the reasons, firstly, why women did what they did - became patrons and benefactors, deaconesses or martyrs - when they were so clearly excluded from obvious and direct power, and secondly, why the echelons of formalized power allowed them to do so.

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<sup>1</sup> See pp. 132-133 n. 49.



## **LOCAL CULTURAL INFLUENCES <sup>2</sup>**

The evidence of the preceding chapters has made it clear that indigenous African influences do not rate well as a favourable influence on the position of women in Roman African society. In his work on the Libyans, Bates (1970: 113) describes this scene with the subsequent conclusion: 'The daily life of the female members of any ancient North African community must, however, have been much what it is at the present time. The women must have prepared and cooked the food, milked the flocks, and, among the more advanced tribes, done the weaving ... The status of women was undoubtedly a good one. ... they had a share in both the religious and in the political life of the people....'. However, apart from Eastern African cultures such as Egypt and Nubia, there is not much in the way of evidence to show that the women of the Maghreb shared in the 'political life of the people', either before or after the Roman conquest, as the preceding chapters have shown. Descriptions of individual powerful African women by Roman, Greek or later Arab writers are more the result of a desire to emphasize 'otherness' to their own civilizations than to depict a genuinely advantageous position for women. The position of African women may compare favourably with later Arab traditions, but certainly not with the conventions of Rome as they were exercised in Africa.

Not a great deal is known about the Punic heritage with regard to female civic prominence, since although there are indications that women occupied priesthoods, we can only guess that these probably came from socially prominent Punic families. About patronage and benefactions by these or other Punic women we know even less than we do about Punic men in this regard. Certainly in scope it is not likely to have borne a great resemblance to the Graeco-Roman tradition of euergetism. We do have a single 1<sup>st</sup> century example of a woman, Suphunibal (nr. 40), the daughter of Annobal Ruso, who donated the funds for a shrine to Ceres in Lepcis Magna in the 1<sup>st</sup> century AD. Such an early example of munificence by an un-Romanized woman of Punic descent suggests that the practice may have had some precedent in earlier Punic tradition. Nicols (1989: 128) is in favour of Punic and/or Hellenistic influences to explain Africa's high proportion (compared to the other Western provinces of the Roman Empire) of municipal patronage by senatorial and a few equestrian women, but he does little to substantiate his statement. He posits a connection between the Phoenician origins of Punic civilization and the tradition of *liberalitas* in the Hellenistic East at a much later date. It is true that from the 1<sup>st</sup> century BC women feature as patrons and benefactors in the Near East (Van Bremen 1983; 1996), preceding the phenomenon of Roman African female patronage and, like the latter, reaching its height in the 2<sup>nd</sup> to 3<sup>rd</sup> centuries. A Hellenistic influence on the African provinces may have come via Rome, particularly since female euergetism is most evident in the period in which the Eastern Julia Domna was the Empress at Rome, and also because this coincided with a period of great wealth and benefaction in Africa generally. Certainly a Hellenistic influence seems to have been at work in honorary statues dedicated to provincial Roman women (Boatwright (2000: 62). Both a Punic and a Hellenistic tradition could therefore have furthered the cause of female euergetism, although in either case the exact path of such influence is difficult to trace with any certainty.

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<sup>2</sup> All numbers (nr. or nrs.) mentioned in this chapter refer to the Table in Appendix A.



## THE SANCTION OF RELIGION IN PAGAN ROMAN AFRICA

The perception in antiquity that women had a special connection to the divine was mentioned in Chapter 12,<sup>3</sup> but in terms of civic power this initially seems to have counted against them rather than in their favour, since it was not usually a positive perception. Where religion was part of civic authority, Roman(ized) women, as Livy indicates above, were originally definitely excluded. Nevertheless as foreign cults and deities gradually became accepted by Rome, so did foreign customs, and new traditions (like the Imperial cult) were forged and spread all over the Empire.

A definite blurring or relaxation of the *mos maiorum* regarding women in public life is undeniable. We know that, according to the 3<sup>rd</sup> century jurist Paulus [*Dig.* 5.1.12.2], women were barred from holding civil offices, but examples of this phenomenon have been found in contemporary Greece and in Asia Minor (Boatwright 1991; Van Bremen 1996). The priesthoods were also at one time a male preserve, as indicated by Livy above, but our evidence shows that during the Empire many priesthoods came to be occupied by women from many levels of society, also in official cults, although, in the African provinces, women did not progress from these to civic offices. Nevertheless, in occupying these priesthoods they played a specific role in the community which commanded respect, as Kraemer quoted in the introduction to this chapter has suggested. The earliest examples of female benefactions are (with one exception<sup>4</sup>) all in the context of a priesthood for women, and for the next two centuries most benefactions by women were connected to these offices. Women undoubtedly entered the male domain of *liberalitas* through the more acceptable area of religion.<sup>5</sup> Their benefactions did not, however, remain dependent on this role, as the following pages will show.

## FAMILY HONOUR & EUERGETISM

Women supporting their menfolk was a time-honoured tradition: since Republican times, laudatory words to mothers, sisters, wives and daughters have been used to reflect the family glory and honour,<sup>6</sup> as the evidence collected in Chapters 6 and 7 demonstrates. These chapters also showed how the values of the private world were taken up by the public world, and from the beginning of the Empire this was also reflected in the iconography of the imperial family, where the depiction of imperial women represented dynastic fecundity, continuity and prosperity.<sup>7</sup> This was particularly evident in the images of the family of Septimius Severus, and more than one scene shows Julia Domna as the mother of the next emperor, even in scenes where it was unusual to portray a woman, like the sacrificial scene illustrated in Figure 12.1. In another panel from the arch at Lepcis

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<sup>3</sup> See pp. 271-272.

<sup>4</sup> Suphunibal (Appendix A, nr. 40) is one exception, and suggestively not apparently a Romanized context, as discussed above.

<sup>5</sup> It is also likely that the religious aspect was especially emphasized in women's benefactions at first. At Rome Tiberius owed his position to his mother, but was not in favour of women interfering by giving advice on matters of state. According to DIXON (1988): *The Roman mother*, 183, he therefore emphasized the religious nature of her distinction so that she could be sufficiently honoured without implying that she enjoyed any political power.

<sup>6</sup> For example Cicero's intended laudation of Brutus' cousin Porcia.

<sup>7</sup> Women reinforced dynastic succession and rights to hold office. The emperor Claudius stressed his legitimacy as emperor through his mother's relationship to Augustus (coin, Fantham 1994: 317). In the African context of the Severan dynasty this is discussed in Chapter 6.



Magna, Septimius is seen clasping the hand of his son Caracalla and among the other figures the empress stands on the left (Figure 6.3 above). As pointed out by Kampen (1991: 243), the emphasis on family is well-timed, since it was Severus who permitted soldiers in the Roman army to marry: 'the Severans used the iconography of the empress as part of a program to create new Roman families and thus to safeguard the future of the empire.' The imperial family was portrayed as a unit, to which those who were hopeful of patronage erected numerous statues and honours. Lepcis Magna in particular was filled with statues and dedications to Septimius, Julia, Antoninus, Geta and also imperial favourites (and natives of the town) such as Plautianus and Plautilla. 'Thus the emperor's home town tactfully asserted their special relationship to the seat of power' (Birley 1988<sup>2</sup>: 149), paying its respects to the women as well as the men. Honouring a woman of a particular family was thus to honour the family itself, and furthermore, it has already been observed that 'it was but a short step from honouring women as intrinsic members of a politically/militarily élite lineage to their dedicating public works themselves' (Culham 1997: 202).

In the context of euergetism honour was in fact being able to show off wealth and position by having donations of large sums of money accepted by the local authority, and duly being significantly thanked for it. It was actions such as this, and the ensuing results, which made one a member of the élite, in imitation of the imperial house. The desire of local élites to imitate the higher social orders has already been mentioned. In funerary reliefs depicting the families of freedmen, family unity is also emphasized. Children of freedmen were themselves free, and parents proudly advertised their entry into the world where they had access to those offices which had been denied their parents. 'Parents and children were depicted together to underscore the importance of familial bonds and to emphasize that those unions that were formed in life were not broken by death' (Kleiner and Matheson 2000: 9). In a number of instances male dedicators included their wives and children in the inscription commemorating a benefaction (nrs. 44; 51; 98; 144; 149; 178).<sup>8</sup> By the 2<sup>nd</sup> century AD 'the families of the benefactors, including their wives and daughters, had become essential elements in the dynastic, self-justificatory ideology of these (wealthy) elites' (Van Bremen 1983: 236).

During the 3<sup>rd</sup> century municipal patronage increasingly came to be named as *perpetuus*, in other words, a permanent family involvement with a particular city (Warmington 1954: 47-48; 51). Since women were quite often named as heirs, they also inherited the financial obligations of civic duties, but without the status.<sup>9</sup> This legal obligation was therefore also applicable on a municipal level.

A number of women were clearly honoured more for their family than in their own right. In some examples women were honoured simply by association, even though they had nothing to do with the original action for which gratitude was being expressed. For example in AD 73 the imperial governor appointed by Vespasian, Rutilius Gallicus, confirmed the dividing line between Oea and Lepcis Magna in a way which benefited the latter (Birley 1988<sup>2</sup>: 16). In return the people of Lepcis honoured his wife, Minicia Paetina, with a statue in the

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<sup>8</sup> ROGERS (1992): 'The constructions of women at Ephesos', is able to deduce from the epigraphical evidence in this city that women first featured in dedications by families, and that women making their own dedications was a later development which flowed from this. This is not consistently reflected by the Roman African evidence, which may be due to the fact that the tradition originated and developed elsewhere and was taken up in Roman Africa in its more developed stage.

<sup>9</sup> In the *Codex Theodosianus* we are told that, when a man died after his nomination as a praetor, leaving only daughters, they inherited his obligations but not his insignia, for that would be 'unlawful and disgraceful' [6.4.17, AD 370].



couple's home town of Turin. Her husband doubtlessly had one too, since he was the actual benefactor, but its inscription has not survived. In other examples women are also honoured because of their family, but their participatory role had increased. Aemilia Sextina (nr. 192), *flaminica* of 2<sup>nd</sup> century Volubilis, who has already been mentioned, was the daughter of Decimus Aemilianus and the wife of Nammius Maternus, the latter prefect of a cohort.<sup>10</sup> The *ordo* of the town decreed land for her mausoleum, paid for the funeral and erected a statue for 'her remarkable moral qualities' as well as 'the financial favours' of her husband (*ob exsimiam eius probitatem et mariti sui Nammi Materni praef(ecti) coh(ortis) Astur(um) et Gallaecor(um) merita*). In return, her husband paid for the base of the statue erected in his wife's honour. In the light of the inscription it is likely that at least her second flamine was awarded to her because of husband's generosity.

Since a woman was identified as a part of a larger unit which served the interests of men, it made women's indirect involvement in the traditionally male sphere of politics more acceptable - it was always activated within the confines of the family, which was their traditional domain. As in the *Laudatio Turiae*, where Turia's 'manly' authority and actions were legitimized by loyalty to husband or father, the end (family honour) justified the means. Women at least were considered as allies - they had the family's interests at heart - and they were certainly not considered as competition or a threat, which other 'outsider' families were. In Rome and in her cities in the empire the local élites decided whether someone was worthy of membership or not. This was in part a question of wealth, but also of whether the new member 'had the social profile necessary for membership, whether or not he would add to the prestige of the group' (Veyne 1987: 95). Sons of high office holders were always a first target for co-option, and municipal councils only reluctantly admitted the families whose wealth lay in commerce.<sup>11</sup> Allowing women to exercise benefactions in the interests of their male kin with political ambitions was probably considered a discreet adjustment, while the encroachment of other non-élite groups would have been highly presumptuous. Thus despite their inability to vote or hold public office, Roman African women were able to influence public events through acts of *liberalitas* which kept the men of their families in the public eye as potential or active officeholders: 'At every level in the upper classes ... women demonstrate their ambiguity of the terms 'public' and 'private' for the Roman world' (Fantham *et al* 1994: 366).

It is clear that for the most part women's initiatives were restricted to helping men, even though the case is not quite as extreme as made out by Lefkowitz (1983), and for Roman Africa there are a few exceptions, as will be seen below. As indicated by the preceding chapters, in a number of instances the advantages gained by Roman(ized) women were initiated because of male interests, for example the access of women of the higher status group to education so that they could in turn educate their sons. Everything was at least initially directed for the betterment of the male in public life. For this purpose more seems to have been invested in women as mothers than as wives, and it was also often as mothers that they inherited or were allowed usufruct of their deceased husband's property. At Rome, Dixon (1988: 194) came to the conclusion that 'women *usually* stood by their husbands and *always* went to great lengths for their sons'. But since legitimate Roman children

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<sup>10</sup> The cohort was transferred from Gaul to Mauretania in the early 2<sup>nd</sup> century, although the name Nammius Maternus is typically African. The cohort did appear to have a number of Africans serving in it (Le Glay 1962), and it may be that Nammius Maternus was returning to his native land.

<sup>11</sup> According to imperial law, families who gained their wealth through small time commerce were to be admitted to municipal councils where there was financial need, but local aristocracies preferred to force members of their own class to financial ruin (Veyne 1987: 114).



belonged formally to the father's descent group, and mothers usually related to the children's interest (Dixon 1985: 354), this meant some involvement with the husband's line. Although women were not encouraged to interfere in male preserves such as politics or military matters on their own behalf - and women were not educated to know anything about them - a woman could legitimately give advice and support in these matters to her husband or her son, although, as Hallet (1984: 241-245) and Dixon (1988: 175) point out, there was a fine line between advice and intrusion. Whether or not her advice would be taken seriously could depend on a number of factors such as her financial position, her standing (based on descent and reputation) or the *concordia* she shared with her husband, or the relationship she had with her son(s). In the imperial family of the Severans, Julia Domna and her female descendants had greater influence and impact as mothers than as wives. The Roman African evidence reveals a larger corpus of inscriptions in which wives support husbands in joint dedications: fourteen instances of husband and wife (nrs. 26; 34; 50; 78; 79; 100-102; 116-119; 147; 157; 160-161; 171-172; 173; 176; 177), and only two instances where mothers dedicated together with sons (nrs. 6; 55).<sup>12</sup> On the other hand, there is only one example of a woman posthumously honouring a husband with a statue or some similar dedication (nr. 31), while of mothers honouring sons there are four examples (nrs. 1; 28; 37; 183). Nr. 1 is posthumous, and in nrs. 28 and 183 a son is honoured by both his mother and father.<sup>13</sup>

At Thugga, for example, we see the ambition for upward mobility realized in the persons of Licinia Prisca and her husband, M. Licinius Tyrannus, who were both *liberti* of M. Licinius Rufus, an *eques* from Carthage. The latter was a well known patron of Thugga [*AE* 1969/70, 652]. Licinia and her husband may have managed his estates in his absence, and, both together and individually, they erected a number of shrines (nrs. 100-102). Licinia Prisca was rewarded with a flaminiate, while her husband became a patron of the *pagus* of Thugga. It does not appear that the couple had any children, although a son would have been eligible for a municipal career despite the freedman status of his father, to whom this was denied. At any rate, there is no evidence for any descendants of M. Licinius Tyrannus occupying municipal office at Thugga. Licinia Prisca seems to have been acting primarily to further the social prestige of her husband, but her own prestige also improved - she is the only *flaminica* of whom we can say with any certainty that she was a freedwoman.

Antonia Saturnina (nrs. 153-154), who constructed a market and village on her land, named the latter for her husband's family, in which she still had three nephews, all of senatorial standing. Shaw (1981b:63) speaks of the simple pride of male landowners who saw themselves as 'founders of cities in miniature (*ktistoi/conditores*)', which they named after themselves: another market and village was built by Phosphoros [*AE* 1913:226] on his own land and named after himself. It would of course have been possible for a woman to give such a village her own family name, but Antonia Saturnina's intention was clearly to honour her husband's family.

But these women to all intents and purposes seem to have been childless. In the case of Pudentilla, on the other hand, we know that both the careers of sons as well as the career of a husband were involved. We know of no actual instances where Pudentilla advantaged Apuleius' career. In fact, the couple seems to have literally moved

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<sup>12</sup> In a number of joint dedications the woman's relationship with the co-dedicator is unknown, either because the information is omitted or because the text has been damaged: nrs. 20, 23, 56, 71, 89, 104 (brother or father?), 145.

<sup>13</sup> These totals do not include testamentary obligations.



out of the public eye, where before the marriage Pudentilla had certainly been active in promoting the interests of her equestrian son, Pontianus, as will be discussed below. The death Pontianus ended this activity, and indeed, Pudens, the younger son, does not appear as the most likely candidate to embark on the highly competitive municipal career, at least not as he is described by Apuleius, with little Latin and no Greek. As for Apuleius himself, his participation in local politics seems to have been rather limited. We are told [*Apol.* 24.9] that he was the son of a magistrate at Madauros and he could therefore have attended the local senate as an observer, but there is no evidence that he was ever a magistrate there. The *ordo* of Carthage voted him an honorary statue [*Flor.* 16], and Harrison (2000: 8 n.30) speculates that he may have been a member of the Carthaginian *ordo* and that this is the reason for the statue. Augustine [*Ep.* 138.19] reports that he never achieved a judicial magistracy in Africa Proconsularis and the provincial priesthood was his highest public office.<sup>14</sup> Only the very wealthy could afford the liturgy of such a priesthood. Obligatory sums spend in honour of office at Carthage could be as high as HS 50 000 or even HS 90 000 (Duncan-Jones 1974: 107). Harrison (2000: 8) speculates that wealth is the reason (in addition to his oratorical prowess) that got Apuleius elected to the provincial priesthood. If Harrison is correct, it is likely that Pudentilla's fortune could have assisted him in his career, since we know that Apuleius himself had been left only a modest fortune of 2 million sesterces by his father which he had to share with his brother, and which he admits had been diminished by his travels and other expenses [*Apol.* 23]. While there is no definite evidence that, if Apuleius was elected chief priest of Africa Proconsularis, this occurred after his marriage, his own lack of fortune and the larger fortune of Pudentilla<sup>15</sup> seems to indicate her involvement as a strong possibility.

Not, of course, that women promoting the political interests of their husbands was entirely unselfish and disinterested. Women gained associative power from men, either through being related to them, which afforded them status as members of a particular social order, or, more directly, by inheriting from them, which made them wealthy in their own right. Through this associative power women could be and were a force in Roman public life, as we have seen. If a woman were wealthy and well connected in her own right (but still through men), this increased her power and authority *vis à vis* her husband, and her wealth could certainly benefit her sons and allow her a share in public visibility through promoting them.

The more personal aspects of a mother's role in the life of her sons has already been discussed in Chapter 6,<sup>16</sup> and as we have seen, a mother's influence over and ambition for her son is amply attested in Roman literature.<sup>17</sup> As far as the public advancement of sons is concerned, there are two aspects worth mentioning: women who promoted their sons, and women who sought power through their sons.

Upward mobility through wealth and social prominence was a definite possibility for provincial Romans. Any free born citizen possessed of a certain minimum fortune could for example enrol as a member of the equestrian

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<sup>14</sup> RIVES (1994a): 'The priesthood of Apuleius', argues that Augustine may have been mistaken, and that the priesthood was rather one for Aesculapius. HARRISON (2000): *Apuleius. A Latin Sophist*, 8 n.30, on the other hand, finds no reason to doubt Augustine, although the latter seems to know more about Apuleius than what we learn from his extant works.

<sup>15</sup> See above pp. 242; 245-246.

<sup>16</sup> See above pp. 160-163.

<sup>17</sup> For example according to Plutarch, Cornelia often reproached her two surviving sons that she was still styled the mother-in-law of Scipio the Younger rather than 'mother of the Gracchi' [*Tib. Gr.* 8.5], which is ironically exactly what she became in the end.



order. As a member of the that order, he could command an auxiliary unit in the legion, or be appointed to an administrative post, which could potentially end in its highest honour, the post of praetorian prefect. On a more localized level even families from the purely commercial ranks were gradually admitted to the decurial ranks, and a career as a local magistrate was within reach for those who possessed the minimum fortune.

Mothers had always worked diligently for the success of their sons. It was entirely acceptable for fathers to promote their sons' careers as councillors by bearing the expenses for, say, public buildings on their behalf (Veyne 1987: 109-110). In fact it would be impossible for any son to contemplate such a career if his father were alive and hostile to the idea, since the funds had to come from his patrimony which his father controlled. Generally only one son from a prosperous family could be considered for such a career, which was very costly, and having more than one son on the municipal council would be proudly advertised. But while it was normally the father's career which helped the son, the prestige and financial support of the mother could also count in his favour. A mother who was or had been a *flaminica* could help them in their own municipal career, since flaminates in the case of men were often semi-hereditary, and a flamine was a step in the direction of equestrian status. Four *flaminicae* are known to have had equestrian sons: Maria Lucina (nr.55); Peducaea Sextia (nr.1); Iulia Bassilia (nr.86); and Vettia Saturnina (nr.148). One of these proud mothers (nr. 148) made the following dedication:

HR MA' FUNA (LAMSORTIS) [CIL 4437 = 18596]  
 GENIO LAMSO | R[TENSI] AUG(USTO) VET | TIA SATURNINA | MATER DUOR | UM EQ(UITUM) ROMA | [N]ORUM.  
 HOSTI | LIORUM SATUR | NINI ET FELICIS, | CONIUNX L(UCII) | HOSTILI(I) FELI | CIO, PONTIFICIS | MUNICIPI(I)  
 LAMBA | ESITANORUM | OB HONOREM FL(AMONII) P(ERPETUI) D(EDIT).

To the genius of Augustus of Lamsortis. Vettia Saturnina, mother to two Roman equestrians, the Hostilii Saturninus and Felix, wife of Lucius Hostilius Felix, municipal pontifex of Lambaesis, dedicates this in return for the honour of being made a *flaminica* in perpetuity.

The fact that Vettia Saturnina is making a dedication to the *genius* of the town rather than some other obscure deity is also not without significance for the social and political advancement of her sons.<sup>18</sup> The career of her husband, L. Hostilius Felix at Lambaesis is also given honourable mention in the inscription. Pudentilla also supported her son, Pontianus, a *splendidissimus eques* [62.3], for example by paying HS 50 000 for his wedding celebrations, part of which went to public donations. It is possible that Pudentilla's retirement for her own wedding to avoid the costs to the townspeople indicates that she was no longer supporting a political career on a local level.

A successful son was the reward of motherhood.<sup>19</sup> At Thugga the *flaminica perpetua* Iulia Maxima (nr. 99) was honoured *ob insignem splendorem filiorum*. Dixon (1988: 73) believes that in the Roman world self-fulfilment did not play any role in promoting the idea of maternal happiness. Instead the emphasis fell on the status a mother gained from her sons' achievements. This ideal concept of reflected or derivative honour and status for women was, however, not always the case in practice. In her discussion on Roman art, Kleiner (2000: 56) refers to the 'elite woman's quest for associative power that was sometimes given and sometimes seized'.

A mother's support of a son's career was considered a moral obligation, but frequent displays of interference

<sup>18</sup> On Vettia Saturnina and her family, see BASSIGNANO (1974): *Il flaminato nelle province romane dell'Africa*, 333-334.

<sup>19</sup> Compare Seneca [*Ad Marciam* 12.1-24.3] who attempts to console Marcia for the loss of her son by listing all his achievements as due to his mother's influence in his life.



and a public display of political influence in a woman were not tolerated in Roman culture.<sup>20</sup> Mothers who worked diligently to advance their sons' careers often encountered resentment in them when they attempted to claim special privileges on the basis of these earlier efforts (especially ones related to power and influence, seen as 'masculine' preserves). Seneca was of the opinion that some women:

*...quae potentiam liberorum muliebri impotentia exercent, quae, quia feminis honores non licet gerere, per illos ambitiosae sunt*

...make use of a son's power with a woman's lack of self-control, who, because they cannot hold office, seek power through their sons. [Ad Marciam 14.2]

The best examples of such women in Roman history are from the better documented senatorial class and in particular the imperial women, such as Agrippina the Younger, the mother of Nero. We have no parallels for this type of ambitious woman in Roman Africa, not even in the Vandal period, which produced a ruling dynasty where such ambition may have become evident. While this is probably due to the fact that we do not have much evidence on the Vandal rulers in Africa, the absence of any kind of public profile for Vandal queens in the historical record could also be attributed to their system of choosing heirs in the ruling family:

Χρόνον δὲ ὀλίγον Γιζέριχος ἐπιβιοῦς ἐτελεύτα πόρρω που ἤδη ἡλικίας ἦκων, διαθήκας διαθέμενος ἐναῖς ἄλλα τε πολλὰ Βανδίλοις ἐπσκηψε καὶ τὴν βασιλείαν ἀεὶ Βανδύλων ἐς τοῦτον ἵεναι ὅς ἂν ἐκ γόνου ἄρρενος αὐτῷ Γιζερίῳ κατὰ γένος προσήκων πρῶτος ὢν ἀπάντων τῶν αὐτοῦ συγγενῶν τὴν ἡλικίαν τύχοι.

Geiseric, after living on a short time, died at an advanced age, having made a will in which he enjoined many things upon the Vandals and in particular that the royal power among them should always fall to that one who should be the first in years among all the male offspring descended from Geiseric himself. [De Bello Vand. 3.7.29]

This usually meant the brother of the deceased king would be next in line rather than the next generation. Mother's ambitions for their sons were therefore less likely to be controversial.

In benefactions women sometimes identified with their cognates. There are three inscriptions where women honour their fathers (nrs. 27; 32; 49 (posthumous)), and one where a grandfather is honoured (nr. 66). Joint dedications with fathers (family unit dedications, not included) are recorded in nrs. 47, 108 and 110. It is possible that in these cases the women were not married - only one husband is mentioned in the case of Maria Victoria (nr. 27) - but this is not certain, and women may not always have supported - or exclusively supported - the members of the family they had married into. However, since most of these cases relate to the period after the 2<sup>nd</sup> century AD, when women (also legally) identified more closely with their husbands and children rather than with the family of their birth (Pomeroy 1975: 162),<sup>21</sup> the former solution seems the more likely one.

## PERSONAL AMBITIONS

It is therefore quite clear at this point why men allowed women into the circle of patronage and benefaction. Firstly it was entered from the point of religion, and secondly and more importantly it was practised in male family interests. It is also clear why women exercised these options, since their interests were primarily family orientated and they worked to achieve the success of husbands and especially sons. But, as Gordon (1990a: 230)

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<sup>20</sup> We may compare Volumnia's role in her son's life (she pleaded with him not to attack Rome), for which she was honoured by the erection of a temple of Fortuna Virilis [Plut., *Cor.* 37]. There is no inference in the ancient author that she had acted improperly - it was quite proper that a mother should foster a son's ambition and curb it where necessary. It was only when this behaviour became repetitive and when women attempted to build up their power that they fell foul of the *mos maiorum*. Seneca scorned over-ambitious mothers, as indicated above, but credited his own mother's support [Ad Helviam 14.2-3].

<sup>21</sup> See p. 46 n.6.



so rightly points out in his discussion of euergetism, 'duty is the most delicious disguise of self-interest'. Certainly the success of husbands and sons did not mean that women were disinterested or devoid of personal ambitions. The status and prestige of women was linked to that of their menfolk, which meant that upward mobility for women could only be achieved through mobility for men, most especially in the case of fathers and husbands.

But apart from this reflected honour, Fantham *et al* (1994: 383) quite rightly note, as does Kraemer in the introduction to this chapter, that women themselves 'gained in prestige and social standing in their communities through this honorific service and through their active patronage of buildings and institutions'. Women did gain a measure of social consequence from occupying priesthoods and from their benefactions, even though they did not exercise any political power. Being publicly celebrated by a statue must have been as personally gratifying for women as it was for men. In the sculptures made in their honour, women stood alone, their likeness prominently and individually displayed in public areas like the forum.<sup>22</sup> Even though statues of male members of the family may have been placed nearby, they were not arranged in couples or family groups. Female honorary sculptures certainly point to an advance in female status. Boatwright (2000: 62) points out that in Rome itself the public display of honorary male portrait statues had been controlled during the Republican period and female honorary statues then were virtually non-existent.<sup>23</sup> By contrast such

sculptures were quite common in the Greek East,<sup>24</sup> and the potential of the dynastic connotations gave impetus to female honorary portraiture under the Roman emperors from Augustus onwards. By the 2<sup>nd</sup> century AD women's public portraiture was fairly common all over the Roman empire. Boatwright (2000) argues that the similarity of some female statues to a particular empress<sup>25</sup> implies that a city's own patroness represented the



FIGURE 13.1 HONORARY STATUE OF  
A MATRON FROM ROMAN AFRICA

<sup>22</sup> In the case of Cornelia, mother of the Gracchi, Augustus's statue to honour her did not depict her sons, although they are mentioned in the inscription [*CIL* VI 10043].

<sup>23</sup> Cornelia's was an exception, and with clear dynastic connotations. On women's public portraiture see FLORY (1993): 'Livia and the history of public honorific statues for women in Rome'.

<sup>24</sup> Cato the Censor referred to such provincial displays as early as 184 BC [Pliny, *NH* 34.31]. In the Greek East women as public patrons also precede the same custom in Rome, for which there are numerous examples (collected in VAN BREMEN (1996): *The limits of participation*).

<sup>25</sup> BOATWRIGHT (2000): 'Just window dressing? Imperial women as architectural sculpture' focusses particularly on their posture and dress.



empress in that city, and that this is further evidence that local élites identified with the imperial family. Since, however, body types were commonly used similarities may not be as significant as Boatwright implies. The sculpture illustrated here (Figure 13.1) may be taken as typical of the type of public statue honouring a woman.<sup>26</sup> Unfortunately very few of these statues, both for men and women, have survived in Roman Africa.

As a further step in women's individual honour, there are instances where it is clear that women achieved more acknowledgement than the men to whom they were related. It is definitely the case in the 4<sup>th</sup> century tomb at Gargàresch, where the fresco work emphasizes the woman Aelia Arisuth rather than her husband in the adjoining niche, both in its superior standard of execution as well as in emphasis in the layout of the entire wall. But there are earlier examples. At Calama towards the end of the 2<sup>nd</sup> or early 3<sup>rd</sup> century, Annia Aelia Restituta was voted five honorary statues while just one was voted to her father, L. Annius Aelius Clemens, *fl. Aug.* (nrs. 15 and 16). In the case of some of the *patronae municipii* mentioned in Chapter 13, the women are honoured by towns for their patronage while there is no record of their husband or father being patron of the same community, and in the case of Oscia Modesta, *patrona* of Aviocalla, her male family is not even mentioned. There are other instances where we cannot equate the lavish gestures for women with the hope for a brilliant career for a husband or son, since as yet there is no evidence of either male relative (nrs. 35; 48; 65; 92; 97; 105-107; 112-114; 120; 122; 127; 142; 156). Mention of male relatives is omitted either by the women themselves or by those who honour them.

All these examples are a relatively late occurrence: there are no examples from the 1<sup>st</sup> century AD, two from the 2<sup>nd</sup> century, two from the period spanning the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> centuries, four from the 3<sup>rd</sup> century, and one from the 3<sup>rd</sup> to 4<sup>th</sup> centuries.<sup>27</sup> Since evidence is most heavily weighted in the 3<sup>rd</sup> century, it is not too far-fetched to assume that this was the result of the increasingly independent role which women were coming to occupy in the provinces of the Empire with regard to patronage and *liberalitas*.

It is also not very surprising, therefore, that women were also able, in some cases, to channel their money and give public prestige where this was not primarily in the interests of their male kin. In the case of two mothers and daughters, Manlia Macrina - Anicia Pudentilla, and Asicia Victoria - Vibia Asicianes (nrs. 63 and 105-106), the support of mothers was strictly speaking support for their daughters as individuals. At Sabratha in the 2<sup>nd</sup> century, Manlia Macrina erected an honorary statue to her daughter, commending Anicia Pudentilla for her benefactions, while at Thugga in the beginning of the 3<sup>rd</sup> century, Asicia Victoria made a substantial donation of HS 100 000 on the occasion of her daughter being honoured with the flaminiate. In both cases the mention of male relatives is omitted altogether, although it is possible that in the case of Manlia Macrina, who was her daughter's heir, there were no male relatives still living. This would not, however, have prevented the women from honouring deceased male relatives. These two examples therefore also indicate an advancement in the civic role of women because it does not primarily serve male career interests.

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<sup>26</sup> As explained in Chapter 7 (p. 146), headless statues contained sockets to receive the portrait of honoured individuals (Kraeling 1962: 184).

<sup>27</sup> Three inscriptions not mentioning male relatives cannot be dated to any specific period: nrs. 48, 97 and 142.



## FINANCIAL NEED

The Romans and the Romanized élite of the provinces 'made no clear distinction between public functions and private rank, or between public finances and personal wealth' (Veyne 1987: 95). The funds from which benefactions were made were often private wealth. As a result, some scholars have expressed the opinion that the participation of women in public benefactions was the result of the impoverishment of the élite, who consequently needed women's wealth to keep up their patronage and resulting status: 'The city needed the wealth of its leading women and was prepared to lavish public honours on those women who acted as benefactresses to the community' (Brown 1988: 15).<sup>28</sup> Jettisoning the *mos maiorum* for financial gains was certainly not limited to the provinces. It already had precedents in the 1<sup>st</sup> and the 3<sup>rd</sup> centuries: Claudius courted freedwomen's contributions in his shipbuilding enterprise [Suet., *Claud.* 18.2 and 19], and Caracalla's edict of 212 was essentially a ploy for greater imperial revenues.

Certainly the demands on the wealthy political class to supply buildings, statues, games and other forms of *liberalitas* must have taken its toll. In Rome the expenses of a public career could be recouped by a lucrative post in the provinces. This was not the case for the members of the municipal élite: 'The true nature of euergetism, however, can be seen most clearly among the municipal notables: perhaps one family in twenty. For them there was no compensation for the financial sacrifices that euergetism obliged them to make' (Veyne 1987: 107). Many members of the municipal élite went beyond the strictly required sum to further *pollicitationes* and benefactions in attempts to outdo their peers. In practice, membership of the *ordo* tended to become hereditary, since the number of wealthy families was naturally limited, and in time councillors were no longer elected but simply appointed by the municipal council oligarchy - 'the problem was not too many candidates but too few' (Veyne 1987: 109).

Augustine spoke out against the sponsorship of public spectacles which ruined many families [*Enarr. in Ps.* 147.7]. At Hippo Regius, the seat of Augustine as bishop, no money had been spent on the forum for at least a century. According to the last book of the *Digest* many members of the urban élite escaped by fleeing to their country estates. Some of the wealthy did not even occupy their town houses, as we saw in the case of the woman who owned the house which stood next to Augustine's church [*Ep.* 99.1].

Financial pressures on municipal élites is then a likely factor in determining women's access to the system of euergetism, allowing them to contribute to benefactions and accumulate the resulting accolades. This partial solution to the problem of female *liberalitas*, while it may explain an intensification of female euergetism in the late 2<sup>nd</sup> to 3<sup>rd</sup> centuries, is however not entirely satisfactory. Although the path to euergetism may have been ruinous, its effects are felt particularly in the 3<sup>rd</sup> century. Jacques (1984: 724-725) observes that in Africa the evidence for *pollicitationes ob honorem* (by both men and women) begins to taper off in the late 2<sup>nd</sup> century. In Africa Proconsularis, 176 inscriptions of this type have been found, of which 104 are situated in the 1<sup>st</sup> century and 72 in the second to early 3<sup>rd</sup>. In Numidia, Jacques counts 104 examples, 51 in the 1<sup>st</sup> century and 53 in the 2<sup>nd</sup> to early 3<sup>rd</sup> century. But some women had already been allowed into the circle of euergetism long before this. There is also no evidence of a decrease in men exercising *liberalitas* at the time when female

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<sup>28</sup> See also FORBIS (1990): 'Women's public image in Italian honorary inscriptions', 505-507.



members of their families entered the arena. Women also felt the strain of obligatory patronage, as we saw in the case of Pudentilla,<sup>29</sup> since benefactions came to be seen as a duty owed by the rich to their cities in turn for prestige. The citizens of Hippo were impressed by the generosity of the noble visitors, Melania and Pinianus, to the Church at Thagaste [Aug., *Ep.* 126.7] and vociferously demanded that Pinianus, Melania's husband, become a priest there [Aug., *Ep.* 125; 126].

It is possible, however, that before a means had to be found to solve a shortage of money, Roman Africans had to find an outlet for the excess of money which was ending up in the hands of women, in other words, a means of redistribution. As Gordon (1990a: 230) notes: 'euergetic women are symptoms of changes in local inheritance systems and of the pressure of Roman law upon them; and also [secondly] of the pressure which the obligation to give puts upon all wealthy families in a locality'. The Roman legal system of partible inheritance which allowed men and women to inherit meant that in practice widows and daughters often had control over considerable financial resources, as we saw in Chapters 10 and 11, whereby women gained control over what were relatively fixed assets. The way of redistributing this was by allowing them to donate money to the community, despite social prejudice against this. Some of our sources imply that wealthy women spent plenty of money in maintaining their own status, and there is no indication that this conspicuous consumption was in the interests of men or their political ambitions. In the *Metamorphoses* Lucius is overawed by the obvious evidence of wealth - the richly adorned furniture, the large number of servants and the elaborate food - which he sees at the house of Byrrhene, from which he draws the conclusion:

*Frequens ibi numerus epulorum et utpote apud primatem feminam flos ipse civitatis.*

I found at Byrrhene's house a great company of strangers, the very flower of our citizens, because she was one of the chief and principal women of the city. [Metam. 2.19]

There are implications that female ambitions could even be detrimental to male interests:

*Nam quanto dives aliqua est et matronae nomine inflata, tanto capaciorem domum oneribus suis requirit, ut campum in quo ambitio decurat.*

For the richer a woman is, and the more puffed up she is with her position as a great lady, so much the more extensive an establishment does she require to fulfill her social obligations and to serve her as a kind of field in which her ambition may manoeuvre without restraint. [Tert., *Ad Uxor.* 2.8]

It was possibly to avoid such self-indulgent expenditure (which could even work against male interests) that women's money was better channelled into benefactions in the interests of their families: 'Economic necessities overcame sexual prejudices and means were found to rechannel these female controlled resources toward the need of the community' (Dyson 1992: 383).

## CHRISTIANITY AND THE CHURCH

At the beginning of this chapter the question of motivation was asked. What motivated women in the Christian context to step away from their domestic role of wives and mothers to become, however temporarily, public icons as martyrs and ascetics, or to play humbler functional roles within the Church? How were their roles regarded by their male contemporaries? These questions produce answers which differed in many ways from those given in the case of their pagan sisters, although the underlying code of Roman civilization is always unmistakable.

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<sup>29</sup> See p. 271.



### **Defining status in the Christian context**

The type of political and public status discussed in the pagan context above did not apply to the early Christian context, since during this period Christianity, a despised and persecuted sect, had not generally been taken up by the local nobility. A political or public aspect in the sense of a status-driven career in the Church really only came into effect towards the middle of the 4<sup>th</sup> century AD. Whatever the breadth of its social context, however, Christianity had two interlinking aspects regarding status: a socio-political and a religious aspect. Sometimes these were combined as women sought both social recognition and rewards from God, but in many cases actions must have been taken solely in the hope of reward in the next life.

One clear difference between the pagan and Christian context was the role of women as wives and mothers. Earthly ambition for sons or husbands was not particularly relevant for mothers and wives in the early years of the Church, since hierarchy was a later development in this body, and also because Christianity was initiated among status groups for whom the higher or more status driven career levels were not normally accessible. But about this early period in Africa we know virtually nothing, and our earliest informant about Christian communities is Tertullian. At this point the Christian community had also acquired members from prominent and wealthy local families, like Vibia Perpetua. By the 4<sup>th</sup> century a career in the Church was a viable option for members of the municipal élite, and mothers like Monica worked diligently to advance a son's social status and ascendancy (for example in the arrangement of his marriage) and his soul. Mothers did not, however, do so through obtaining a higher status for themselves, and the reflected glory gave a status which was very much indirect.

Religious influences of mothers over sons, like Helena over Constantine, are given greater attention in the Christian sources. The example of Monica and Augustine is well known, and it is likely that the Vandal king Hilderic was also inclined to Catholicism through his mother, Eudocia. Some Christian mothers are indicated as having a premonition of a son's greatness, as in the case of Mariana, the mother of Fulgentius. The author of Fulgentius' biography attributes some sort of premonition to Mariana, who named her son 'Fulgentius' ('bright' or 'famous') 'as if knowing what he would become in future' [*Vita Fulg.* 1]. We may regard this as an embroidered or hagiographical version of the convention that mothers worked to promote their sons. Fulgentius' initial decision to withdraw to a monastery, however, was opposed by his mother, who, according to the author of the *Vita*, hoped to dissuade him by her tears [*Vita Fulg.* 4].

Public status and recognition of their own were achieved, though not necessarily sought, by Christian women mainly in two ways. Firstly, through patronage, which was primarily practised by the wealthy as it had always been, but also by women on humbler levels who worked among the poor and the needy, sometimes as deaconesses, but not always in this official capacity. Secondly, by personal achievement and reputation, which essentially involved asceticism and martyrdom, although in the case of martyrdom, which occurred before the 4<sup>th</sup> century, rewards were not sought in the present life. For the rest, however, status was now awarded by piety and holiness, coupled with wealth and influence.

A measure of status was also achieved by some women who became leaders of women's monastic communities, but essentially, since in these early Christian centuries in Africa we hardly hear of them, this was a retired life



without much of a public profile.<sup>30</sup> Far greater attention is given to wealthy ascetics such as Melania, who founded such communities.

### **The wealthy élite**

As explained at the beginning of Chapter 12, the system of patronage and benefactions continued under the Christian empire in a somewhat altered form, and, despite Christian ideals of humility and even poverty,<sup>31</sup> socially the wealthy *honestiores* still continued to play the dominant role. Personal wealth and social status could ensure a bishopric, and in the case of Cyprian it was most likely his patronage which secured him his seat as bishop at Carthage, since at the time that he was elected he was still only a catechumen (Bobertz 1991: 75-130). But it was not only their own wealth and social prominence which could pave the way to such a position. Even though in the West women could not occupy senior positions themselves, at least not in the orthodox Church, women like Lucilla, who was discussed in the previous chapter, were able to arrange matters to their liking, and her arrangements certainly proved advantageous to the career of Maiorinus.<sup>32</sup>

Lucilla's power and initiative in the rise of the Donatist church was based firstly on her considerable wealth, and also on the system of patronage which allowed her to use her wealth in a manner which was most advantageous to her. As a member of the nobility, her social status outranked that of the bishops and clergy of the local church at Carthage, a status which allowed her to offer both financial gifts and political protection (through her connections with the ruling class) to the bishops opposing Caecilian's election.<sup>33</sup> Maiorinus certainly benefited from his acquaintance with Lucilla - he rose from being a humble deacon to becoming a bishop. Thus, as in pagan society, rise to prominence was often a result of patronage and not of personal endeavour, and women could still exercise this, even if they could not occupy these offices themselves.<sup>34</sup> In the case of Lucilla, therefore, patronage was exercised for personal advantage. In the case of Melania, another generous patron, it was no doubt her status and wealth which persuaded Augustine to accede to her point of view in the incident regarding Pinianus' secondment to the Church, and clearly, despite her ascetic lifestyle and reputation of holiness, Melania had no compunction in exercising these ancestral advantages to get her own way.<sup>35</sup> Other forms of patronage, such as the founding of monasteries, were clearly intended, as in the pagan world, to make visible the generosity of the benefactor. Benefactresses may not have been honoured with statues, but then, pagan women certainly never had biographies devoted to them, or the record of their martyrdom annually commemorated.

Conversely we must ask why the Church authorities allowed such patronage by women to continue. Clearly

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<sup>30</sup> References to such women in the African context are given in Chapter 12, p. 319.

<sup>31</sup> For example: 'It is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven [Matthew 19.24].

<sup>32</sup> For Lucilla see above, p. 315-316.

<sup>33</sup> On Lucilla's status, see *PCBE* 1 'Lucilla', 649, and *PLRE* 1, 'Lucilla', 517. Given her status, it was doubly insulting to be publicly rebuked by the bishop Caecilian, who was from a social point of view her inferior.

<sup>34</sup> TORJESSEN (1993): *When women were priests: women's leadership in the early church*, 98-99, notes a close parallel to Lucilla's action in the example of Zenobia, the queen of Palmyra, who installed her client Paul of Samosata as bishop when the chair became vacant, and, despite the ensuing controversy, Zenobia was able to protect her client and his position.

<sup>35</sup> See p. 316.



they were in two minds about the matter, with laws enacted against women leaving legacies to the priesthood only to be repealed shortly afterwards.<sup>36</sup> The ambivalence towards the dependency of the Church on wealthy women, as discussed in Chapter 11,<sup>37</sup> is no doubt linked to the fact that the Church authorities were uncomfortable with the type of female power displayed by Lucilla, which they countered by keeping the official position of women in the Church as small as possible, and exerting moral authority in which the ideal woman was silent and obedient.<sup>38</sup> Since the Church was increasingly accepting responsibility for the poor, not to mention the need for contributions towards the upkeep of a professional clergy, a measure of avarice in its representatives in Africa is not unexpected (Hopkins 1999: 126). Wealthy women in Cyprian's community were particularly addressed in admonitions to give generously to the poor [*Ad Demetr.* 15.284-287], and while the Church in these early centuries did not advocate or prescribe the actions of Melania, who together with her husband gave away virtually all her earthly possessions, its attitude towards wealthy women is clear: 'it is more blessed to give than to receive' [*Romans* 20.35]. At the same time it must be emphasized that bishops like Cyprian, and later on Augustine, did not rise from the class of *humiliores*; and, as can clearly be seen from the letters and works of Augustine, they supported the landed aristocracy, on whose goodwill and patronage they often depended. Despite alms for the destitute or the protection of poor widows, the Church did not take up the cause of the *coloni* who were often exploited by wealthy landowners (Baldwin 1962: 9).

### Ascetics<sup>39</sup>

To a certain extent the discussion of the phenomenon of female asceticism flows from the previous discussion of wealthy women, since it was their status group who initially had the experience of autonomy provided by the pagan context, as the preceding discussion has shown. Asceticism, or a lifestyle of withdrawal from the world, was also more easily within reach for those who were financially independent than it was for the poor, who had to earn their daily living. Asceticism firstly gave women greater freedom, since it initially meant living in one's own environment but not having to marry, and secondly a measure of moral authority.<sup>40</sup> It was also a role which won the approbation of the Church, and an area in which women could achieve excellence as well as men. Female ascetics were, by the definitions of the Church, ideal women, since they had renounced their sexuality and their role as Eve.<sup>41</sup> Women like Demetrias (who incidentally also made a substantial financial donation to the Church on retiring from the world) were lauded by Augustine, although in all fairness Augustine did not

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<sup>36</sup> As CLARK (1993): *Women in Late Antiquity*, 26, observes, the laws of Late Antiquity, also those regarding marriage, divorce and remarriage, were particularly inconsistent and confusing.

<sup>37</sup> See above p. 315.

<sup>38</sup> SAWYER (1996): *Women and religion in the first Christian centuries*, 40, sees a possible influence on the Roman world in the Hebrew and Greek tradition, quoting an extract from the apocryphal *Sirach* in which dependence on wealthy women was seen as a disgrace, reinforcing the patriarchal Hellenistic ideal also voiced by Philo and Josephus.

<sup>39</sup> See KRAEMER (1993): 'The conversion of women to ascetic forms of Christianity' for the background of the origins of the Church in the time of the apostles; also RUETHER (1993): 'Misogynism and virginal feminism in the Fathers of the Church', for an overview of the sentiments of the early Church Fathers on asceticism for women. The most persuasive analysis is by CAMERON (1989): 'Virginity as metaphor: women and the rhetoric of early Christianity' who very convincingly explains the links between misogyny and the emphasis on virginity.

<sup>40</sup> The feminist motivations of women becoming ascetics are analysed by SIMPSON (1993): 'Women and asceticism in the fourth century' within the context of the complex political, social and religious changes of the time.

<sup>41</sup> MILES (1991): 'Becoming male - women martyrs and ascetics', 59-63, discusses this aspect of 'becoming male' including an analysis of Perpetua's dream of turning into a man. Further references on denial of female sexuality, p. 231 n. 77.



persuade all wealthy young women to pursue an ascetic lifestyle.<sup>42</sup> At the same time, however, the idealization of asceticism and withdrawal from the world was to the advantage of the orthodox Church in entrenching the subordinate and even segregated position of women in Christian society. Some of the laws enacted by emperors at Constantinople are strongly reminiscent of the constraints placed on women from the Republican period or early Empire.<sup>43</sup>

Cameron (1994: 156) observes that asceticism and withdrawal from the world may have been easier for women than it was for men, since women were more closely associated with 'simplicity, the home rather than the world, the private rather than the public sphere, and the lack of (male) education'.<sup>44</sup> Certainly the misogynistic writings of some Church fathers like Tertullian must have contributed to bringing about women's rejection of their own sexuality for asceticism (Cameron 1994: 156).

### **Deaconesses**

Some advancement in status within the Christian communities themselves was possible for women, and such status may in fact have been based on their secular wealth and standing. Women in the years of the early Church allowed their houses to be used for Christian gatherings (since no church building had yet taken place) were sometimes rewarded with the position of deaconess, and clearly women possessing such property must have been wealthy in their own right. There were other small benefits for women occupying this role. Nursing the sick at least did give women some greater mobility, certainly an advantage in the increasingly restrictive attitudes encouraged by the Church which were intended to keep women in semi-seclusion.

The orthodox Church was not entirely comfortable with this anomalous female role within its hierarchical and patriarchal structure, and, as has already been described, the role of deaconess in the Church was rapidly relegated to a function which was as far removed from celebrating the Eucharist, the function of the priest or presbyter, as possible. By the 4<sup>th</sup> century in the West there is no evidence for the title 'deaconess' having survived in the orthodox Church at all (Simpson 1993: 309). In their role as caregiver, visiting the sick and caring for the poor, women could build a reputation but in the hierarchy of the Church they had no authority at all.

### **Martyrs and confessors**

To the question of what made women renounce their families and sacrifice themselves in the cause of Christianity, the answer can only be religious fervour and personal fulfilment, in fact the very antithesis of the traditional role in which women as wives and mothers were destined to sacrifice their interests to the careers and lives of men. The proportion of female martyrs was not particularly high - Monceaux (1963: 170-175) lists epigraphic references to the names of 198 Roman African martyrs, 15% of which are women. The high number

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<sup>42</sup> An example already discussed was the ward of the Church entrusted to Augustine's care (see p. 64).

<sup>43</sup> The following examples bear some comparison to the norms related by Valerius Maximus and referred to in Chapter 1, p. 5. Regarding a woman's appearances in public, the 5<sup>th</sup> century laws of Theodosius II found legal cause for divorce, among many other things, a man's wife going to the circus, theatre or arena against his wishes or without his knowledge [*Cod. Iust.* 5.17.8]. Justinian's 6<sup>th</sup> century legislation was more specific, naming plays and contests against animals [*Nov.* 22.15].

<sup>44</sup> It is this contrast, says CAMERON (1994): 'Early Christianity and the discourse of female desire', 156, that allows Gregory to play on the idea that it was Macrina, a woman, who converted her more worldly brother Basil to the true philosophy of asceticism.



of martyrs (both men and women) in North Africa generally is usually connected to the status of martyrs and the popularity of martyr worship, which found its culmination in the Donatist Church (Brisson 1958: 292-307). As discussed in the previous chapter, the martyrs and confessors were something of a headache for the Church authorities like Cyprian since they challenged their own central authority (Hopkins 1999: 127-128).

In one sense the martyrs replaced the multitude of pagan deities by making up the cult of the saints. Before the dominance of Christianity Roman empresses had assumed some of the larger-than-life attributes associated with the pagan deities like Demeter/Ceres, and they themselves were sometimes officially deified.<sup>45</sup> Thus martyr figures like Perpetua and Felicitas transcended sex and gender issues in the same way that Juno or Tanit as



FIGURE 13.2 MOSAIC OF FELICITAS AND PERPETUA  
RAVENNA, 5<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY

goddesses, and the empresses by association, had done so. Like them, the saints were seen as figures possessing certain powers. But despite the attention paid to martyrs' tombs and relics such as robes and bones, imagery is not commonly associated with the African martyrs. Apart from the portrait of Monica featured in Figure 7.26, no other icons of African martyrs are known, and the accompanying images of Perpetua and Felicitas originate from Ravenna.<sup>46</sup>

Essentially martyrdom occurred over three centuries, and, by the time of Augustine, the actions of early female martyrs like Perpetua or Crispina were already Christian mythology,

difficult to relate to a contemporary context. These women had become icons, held up as ideals but increasingly removed from social reality. Clearly the prominent role played by the women martyrs Perpetua and Felicitas did not sit well with the orthodox Catholic priests who had to celebrate their martyrdom, as discussed by Shaw (1993) and Salisbury (1997: 170-179). Augustine's sermons on Perpetua and Felicitas are particularly interesting as an indication of how the Church fathers attempted to deal with the behaviour of such female icons in more peaceful times. Augustine wrote four sermons on their martyrdom, and in all of these he attempts to explain away anomalies that would make the martyrdom inconsistent with the social Christian morality of his own day. Augustine must commend Felicitas and Perpetua for following their calling to martyrdom and giving up their husbands and families for this purpose, since this is the message of the New Testament, to leave everything behind and follow Christ. But in a more contemporary context he reprimanded Ecdicia who, in following her calling to celibacy, refused to obey her husband [Aug., *Ep.* 262].<sup>47</sup> In this situation Augustine felt

<sup>45</sup> Compare for example the parallel of Julia Domna in OLIVER (1973): 'Julia Domna as Athena Polias'. The cult statue of Livia in the shrine of Ceres Augusta at Lepcis Magna shows the wife of Augustus complete with turret crown, corn ear and poppy garland, combining the attributes of Ceres, Cybele and Tyche (Wood 2000: 97 n.38). Illustrated in G. CAPUTO and G. TRAVERSARI, *Le sculture del teatro di Leptis Magna* (Rome 1976) 76-79 nr. 58.

<sup>46</sup> Perpetua and Felicitas did, however, have their own basilica where they were buried [Vict., *Hist. Persec.* 9].

<sup>47</sup> Ecdicia's situation was discussed on p. 229.



that 'spiritual aspirations did not free her from her social duties to her family' (Salisbury 1997: 173). Other anomalies between 'heroic past' and present are also ironed out. The absence of Perpetua's husband from the scene is accounted for by pointing out that the devil knew that Perpetua was strong enough to withstand the temptations of the flesh, and therefore sent her father to tempt her to break with her faith [Aug., *Serm.* 281].<sup>48</sup> In the same sermon, Augustine also paints Perpetua as a dutiful daughter, who in her compassion for her father did not reject him as her father nor her own birth, rather than deal with the reality of a daughter who, in following the will of God, had to reject the authority of her earthly father.

The fact that two women portray a central role in the text also presented a problem to Augustine, who held that men led and women obeyed.<sup>49</sup> Perpetua's role of leadership in the *Passio* is indisputable. It was she who pressed the officials to give them better conditions in prison, and who was able to persuade the military tribune with the result that they were not forced to wear pagan costumes in the arena.<sup>50</sup> To counter this authoritative role Augustine therefore emphasizes that Perpetua was of the 'sex that was more frail' (*sexus infirmior*) [Serm. 281], temporarily transformed into a man in her dream because otherwise she would not have been able to withstand the trials that lay before them [Serm. 280; *De Nat. et Orig. Anim.* 4.18.26]. In these works he also juxtaposes the women's role with that of Eve, thus reminding his audience that Perpetua and Felicitas 'were anomalies in a world that fell due to the actions of a woman' (Salisbury 1997: 175). According to Shaw (1993: 41), Augustine also attempts to detract from the fact that the feast day was named for the two women rather than for their four male companions<sup>51</sup> by making their names, Perpetua and Felicitas, into a play on words:<sup>52</sup>

*Hoc enim erat nomen ambarum, quod munus est omnium. Nam cur omnia martyres perferunt, nisi ut perpetua felicitate gloriantur? Hoc ergo illae vocabantur, ad quod cuncti vocantur. Et ideo cum esset in illo certamine plurimus comitatus, harum duarum nominibus omnium est significata perennitas, omnium signata solemnitas.* For that was the name of these two which is the reward of all. For wherefore do martyrs endure all things if not for this, that they may rejoice in perpetual felicity? The women therefore were called that unto which all were called. And therefore, although there was in that contest a goodly company, with the names of these two the eternity of all is signified, the solemnity of all is sealed.

The explaining away of anomalies by Augustine was continued by Quodvultdeus, bishop of Carthage in the middle of the 5<sup>th</sup> century, who also expressed amazement that these members of the weaker sex could have their names placed before the men martyred on the same occasion [*Sermo de Temp. Barb.* 1.5.1-9], especially when the evidence of their womanly weakness (pregnancy and breastfeeding) is given so much attention in the *Passio*.

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<sup>48</sup> See Chapter 4, p. 61.

<sup>49</sup> Augustine's views on male leadership are discussed by RUETHER (1993): 'Misogynism and virginal feminism in the Fathers of the Church', especially pp. 267-269.

<sup>50</sup> This prominent role by a Christian woman is partly what leads FRENCH (1993): 'Blandina and Perpetua', 171-175, to suspect Montanist influence. Further reasons are provided by KLAUTER (1993): 'The role of martyrdom and persecution in developing priestly authority of women', 111-113, who notes that, at the beginning of the 3<sup>rd</sup> century when the martyrdom took place, Montanism had not yet been rejected by the orthodox Christian community at Carthage, and Perpetua and Felicitas are celebrated as martyrs by both the Catholic and the Montanist movements.

<sup>51</sup> In all of the *Acta Martyrum* there is a single case which involves only women (Agape, Irene and Chione), and four others which carry the name of the women/woman in the title. More often women are included as the 'companions' of the male martyrs and given a nominal role. In another African example, the Scillitan martyrs, the male members of the group speak far more than the women, whose contributions are short and basic. A list of female martyrs in the *Acta* and general discussion in CARDMAN (1993): 'Acts of the women martyrs'.

<sup>52</sup> SHAW (1993): 'The passion of Perpetua', 41, comments that Augustine seems rather taken with the banal pun, 'given the number of times he repeats it'.



He finally resorts to praising God for showing that *no* sex is unworthy of his grace, and reminding his audience that all women were daughters of Eve, and that Perpetua and Felicitas were able to overcome this disadvantage because Eve had not been admitted into their souls.

### **GENERAL CONCLUSIONS ON PAGAN AND CHRISTIAN WOMEN**

It is clear that in Roman Africa both the pagan and the Christian contexts had their limitations for women with ambitions, and that in both cases women with wealth and status were allowed to circumvent such limitations. In the pagan tradition women were allowed an increasing amount of prestige and status and in some cases, admittedly not many, their ambitions are revealed not to be primarily in the interests of the men of their families, particularly in the final years of euergetic practice. Christian *mores* limited women by their renewed emphasis on chastity, but women gained by the freedoms offered through celibacy (preferably before marriage or with their spouses' consent) and personal fulfilment.

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## CHAPTER 14

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# SOME FINAL CONCLUSIONS ON WOMEN IN ROMAN AFRICA

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The purpose of this final chapter is not to summarize every single finding of this study on the role and position of women in Roman North African society, since these have been captured in the conclusions throughout, and would result in mere repetition. It aims rather to draw together the threads and concepts around which this study was structured, and review some final conclusions from the findings of the thesis in this regard. The authenticity of the portrait of Pudentilla will be reviewed, since this, as mentioned in the Preface, was in part the reason why this research was undertaken. Before we can do this, however, two broader aspects will be assessed, since essentially this study has attempted to fulfill two interrelated aims: firstly, as set out in Chapter 1, to reveal both the private role of women within the family as well as the niche they gained in the public life of their cities, with some emphasis on the links between the private and the public, for example in the very public manner in which private ideals and imagery were displayed, or how women's private or family interests gave impetus to the development of their role in public life as patrons and benefactors. Secondly, as defined particularly by chapters 2 and 3, this study has attempted to show how different contexts could affect the status and quality of women's lives in both their public and private aspects: African, Punic, Roman, Vandal or Byzantine, pagan or Christian, wealthy élite or rural poor. It was these elements which shaped and affected the lives of the women who lived in the Romanized African context.

### PRIVATE AND PUBLIC

The public and private division applied most specifically to the Romanized evidence, since it is through the Roman media that is most clearly and most explicitly expressed. The fact that in Roman or Romanized civilization public and private were inextricably linked may be symbolically represented by the Severan arch at Lepcis Magna, which has come up a number of times in the discussion.<sup>1</sup> Here Iulia Domna in her private role

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<sup>1</sup> See above pp. 101-102; 276.



as a wife and mother is depicted on a public monument, embodying the concepts of 'reproductive sexuality, the family and the happiness and prosperity of community and the future' (Kampen 1991: 221), essential elements for the well being of the Empire.

Were it not for the Roman tendency to publicly display these private virtues on monuments and tombstones, our evidence for women in Roman antiquity would have been far less than it is. The overwhelming majority of the epigraphical evidence relates to women's private role as devoted wives and dutiful mothers, a domestic ideal which changed very little over the centuries, and was reinforced by Christian *mores*. For the most part it was clear that these were, however, ideals, and that they could not be held to reflect a whole or complete reality, in the same way that we cannot take the various exemplars of feminine vice in some of the more rhetorical literary passages of Apuleius or Tertullian as mirroring women's reality. It would be hard to imagine that all the women remembered as chaste, modest, loyal, frugal, good mothers and wives were really as virtuous as their tombstones attested, or that women wearing richly dressed and wearing gold jewellery were really embarking on the road to sin, as is suggested in the fiery writings of Tertullian, for example. These ideal images and their converse are not without value, however, for they tell us something about how men and women of that society would have liked women to behave. It tells us about the visible parameters of behaviour within which women, particularly those of the local nobility, were socially accepted, and about gender relationships in the Roman African context. Here and there we saw a more nuanced picture of more unusual personal attributes for which women were appreciated, as in the case of the 'exceptional teacher' from Caesarea, which perhaps reflect something more real.<sup>2</sup> But were it not for the personal revelations and reminiscences of Augustine, particularly in his *Confessiones*, we would have been much less well informed about the realities of the private world of family life, since Augustine mentions not only the family he grew up in, but also refers to other family situations with a frankness that is generally foreign to Latin literature. Although our epigraphical evidence for ideal marriages may paint a picture of marital harmony and even equality, the marriage patterns observed in the 4<sup>th</sup> century world of Augustine showed a much more patriarchal and hierarchical structure than we could have imagined from our 'ideal' texts.

Whether or not women possessed these ideal qualities of chastity, modesty and fidelity, these attributes could certainly be represented according to certain Roman codes of dress and demeanour. The outward interpretation of many of these sterling qualities in women was discussed in Chapter 7. They related firstly to aspects such as class, rank, age and trade or profession, but for the élite in particular these outward aspects could be engineered to reflect or represent the ideal private virtues such as modesty and dignity. Certainly a number of Roman African statues or busts attest to women with modest pose, serious expression and the austere composure of the *matrona*. A small number of statues attest to matrons wearing the *stola* and *palla*, hairstyles and items of jewellery which were contemporary with those worn in Rome. Were élite women truly as Romanized as they are sometimes represented? Possibly some of them may have been, since we also have visual representations of women who were quite clearly not very Romanized, even though they sometimes bore Roman names, such as Mania Secunda.<sup>3</sup> Some status was clearly attached to distinguishing oneself from the lower orders of society,

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<sup>2</sup> See above pp. 67; 197.

<sup>3</sup> See above, p. 62 and Figure 4.1.



and such Roman attributes would have been upheld especially in the early years of Roman occupation, though of course towards Late Antiquity fashions in Rome had changed while statues still represented members of the municipal aristocracies in the traditional Roman garb. Women could distinguish themselves from the 'barbarian' not necessarily by a Roman bloodline, since clearly local lineages came to play a dominant role in Roman Africa, but by the outward trappings which indicated their place in the hierarchy of power, and no doubt the clothing worn by Roman matrons, or by women like Aelia Arisuth in Late Antiquity, would qualify for what Clark (1993: 109) calls 'power-dressing'.

We saw the opportunities and the limitations offered to women by particularly Roman civilization, most especially in the area of Roman law, and how these developed over the period under investigation. The right to inherit and a relaxation of *tutela* certainly benefited women, enabling some of them to become wealthy and independent. So how wealthy were Roman African women in actual fact? Some examples of wealthy women were discussed in Chapter 11, but of course these were the notable exceptions who stood out among the indistinguishable masses. Attempts to deal with women as property owners in lower orders, for example among the *coloni*, were limited by shortage of evidence. At a higher social level, women's wealth and property ownership created a situation which in time allowed, indeed necessitated, their participation in the practice of euergetism in their cities. Thus, although in ideal terms Roman(ized) women lived their lives in the home, caring for the well-being of husband and family, there can be no doubt that they were not isolated from the broader changes which took place in the Roman world, such as the *Constitutio Antoniniana* or the changes in municipal life which took place in Late Antiquity, which at first glance seem to affect only the lives and careers of Roman African men, and that many Roman African women were actually participants in this broader world.

Alongside the first illustration in this thesis (Figure 1), Plutarch expresses his approval of the Roman tradition which commemorated women with suitable honour, just as men were commemorated,<sup>4</sup> in contrast to the Greek tradition as worded by Thucydides, that a virtuous woman should not be spoken of. This applied both to the recognition of women's private virtues as well as of their role as benefactors - as we saw, in honorary benefactions women's *liberalitas* was acknowledged in a manner similar to that for male benefactors. Were it not for this very public appreciation accorded to women for their role in both private and public life, our evidence for the women of Roman Africa would be much diminished. Although women had a much lower profile than men in the civic life of their cities, there are a number of examples in which women took the initiative in creating a public profile, and were honoured with public statues. In the main they can be seen to have been working to further the success of their husbands and sons, but there were a few examples where women did not act primarily in the interests of their male kin.

The evidence which was collected in Chapter 12 and further assessed in Chapter 13 showed that, although some women of the municipal aristocracy were able to advance their own interests in public life, this was towards the end of the period of euergetism, and this practice was gradually eroded by Christian *mores* which ideally kept women out of the public eye and out of any form of political involvement. Ironically, however, it was with the rise of Christianity that women entered the public arena in a more spectacular way than ever before. As Arnobius points out, it was these same women, 'whose weaker constitution kept them from public concerns'

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<sup>4</sup> See the page before Contents.



(*quas ab negotiis publicis condicio fragilitatis excepit*) [Adv. Nat. 7.42] who died for their faith in the most public manner and were actually venerated as Christian martyrs. The African inclination to monotheism in the worship of Ba'al-Saturn and heritage of human sacrifice was probably influential in helping Christianity take root in Africa, and responsible for the stronger inclination to martyrdom here than anywhere else in the Roman world. That women in particular were drawn to martyrdom could be accounted for by Shaw's explanation that women reacted against the devaluation of their sex particularly emphasized by the indigenous African traditions, and seized the opportunity for glory and everlasting life. But, while during the persecutions women could rise to prominence through martyrdom and as *confessoras*, these roles were limited to specific periods and, in time, became as removed from the lives of ordinary Christian women as the pagan goddesses had been before them. The untraditional behaviour of a Perpetua or a Crispina was certainly not encouraged by the later African Church fathers like Augustine. In Augustine's estimation the Roman African matron Ecdicia, for example, had erred not by giving her own money to some monks, but in the fact that she had done so without the permission or knowledge of her husband [Ep. 262.11]. This is but one example of how society and the individual family structures became increasingly hierarchical and patriarchal.

### **CULTURE, RELIGION AND ECONOMIC STATUS**

This study attempted to examine, as far as the evidence allowed and plausible conjecture could be maintained, how the various civilizations operating in North Africa during the period under discussion influenced women's rights to autonomy and self-sufficiency. In the introductory chapter the question was asked whether the apparent autonomy of the women of the propertied status groups was misleading or whether it represented some real change in gender relations.<sup>5</sup> This was also relevant for the authenticity of the image which Apuleius presents of Pudentilla in its context. During the first three centuries AD it is clear that only the members of the municipal aristocracy or those who married into their ranks, like the upwardly mobile Fabia Bira, could override at least some of the gender strictures for women by their wealth and status. In that sense the evidence gives us the impression that autonomy and authority were determined more by wealth and status, especially as provided by family connections, than by gender. Certainly on average a wealthy women of consequence could accomplish more than a poor *colonus* could ever hope to. This conclusion is certainly not peculiar to Roman Africa – in fact, it is something which is seen commonly in societies with great divisions between the wealthy and the poor. In ancient societies it is however something which is sensed but difficult to prove with hard evidence, since ironically it is exactly women of these status groups for whom 'ideal' gender behaviour is upheld the most in our literary evidence, and 'ideal' behaviour was essentially defined as modest and retiring. In Roman Africa, however, we do have evidence for the autonomy and independence of some female members of the local aristocracies, but it would be naïve to think that these women were allowed their small role in municipal politics were it not for their connections and their wealth. Thus female autonomy did represent the culmination of a long period of small changes in gender relations, although these pertained mainly to women of the élite, and the changes did not stand the test of time, since female autonomy and influence in Roman Africa waned under Christian dominance.

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<sup>5</sup> See p. 7.



What also became clear in this multicultural context is that women in the Roman African provinces were, broadly speaking, advantaged by Roman and to a lesser (or less discernible) extent by Punic traditions, while African indigenous traditions generally can be said to have had the opposite effect, even when they initially may seem favourable to women. We saw this for example in the decreased proportion of commemorations for women in rural societies (when compared to those of men in the same context), where women in urban Romanized and Christian contexts received a far higher proportion of the commemoration.<sup>6</sup> This evidence has been taken to reflect a low social valuation of women in the less Romanized areas. Romanization may have been expedient for African men who wanted to advance on the political ladder of imperial rule, but it was not essential for status or acknowledgement - in Chapter 2 a number of instances were given where men (for example tribal chiefs) were awarded prestige by the Romans without being Romanized.<sup>7</sup> But for African women Romanization held benefits which were not accorded to them in the African polygamous marriage system, as the disparaging comments of Sallust and Procopius indicated.<sup>8</sup> The polygamous marriage system also lends support to the theory that exposure of particularly female children was foreign to the African tradition, since a number of wives indicates a higher proportion of women in the population. But while women may have been protected from exposure, we may also note that having many wives was counted an advantage in working in the fields, so this ostensible advantage did not come without strings attached.<sup>9</sup> On the other hand, property ownership by women was a phenomenon which benefited from the contact with Roman practice, since in the African traditions, where descent was determined by the female line, women could serve as a legal conduit to pass on property owned by their husbands to their sons, but could not own property themselves.<sup>10</sup> A negative influence via the African tradition may also be responsible for the unusually low proportion of wills made by Roman African women as against Roman African men, compared to evidence on the proportions from other Roman provinces across the Empire.<sup>11</sup> A possible interpretation of this is that the Roman and African traditions were working against each other, in other words, that some Roman(ized) women made wills but that they are fewer in number because of African traditions which inhibited direct property ownership by women. Almost all our evidence for education also relates to the Romanized context,<sup>12</sup> undeniably an advancement for women. Only one other aspect from the native African tradition advantaged women, and that was their veneration for the older members of the community, both men and women. This also went some way to explaining the peculiarly large number of unrealistically high ages given on tombstones.<sup>13</sup>

In dealing with women from a less affluent context the evidence was less abundant, but more diverse in character, and we have some rare opportunities, for example through cursing tablets, to observe the subculture

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<sup>6</sup> See p. 177.

<sup>7</sup> See pp. 30-31.

<sup>8</sup> See p. 174.

<sup>9</sup> See pp. 51; 209-212.

<sup>10</sup> See p. 250.

<sup>11</sup> See p. 226.

<sup>12</sup> Sophonisba is our single exception here.

<sup>13</sup> See pp. 175-177.



which existed behind the more obvious Romanized façade which was meant to convey prestige and status. The evidence provided by women who had to earn their own living can also be placed in this category. In employment, as in most other areas, women were best represented by the most Romanized cities, while areas like Mauretania and Tripolitania provided very much less evidence. Our only testimony for female employment in Tripolitania, for example, came from the mosaics illustrating field labour, an occupation with a very low status, and it would appear from the illustration in Figure 9.7, an agricultural relief of Libyan origins, that the African antecedents for this type of employment for women are quite articulated.

It would thus seem from the evidence presented here that the stories about prominent women in northern Africa either stem from the eastern parts of Africa, which were influenced by Semitic and Hellenistic traditions, or otherwise are tales exaggerated in the spirit of characterizing the barbarian Other. It can also be illustrated from modern parallels that there are other societies where a single woman may rise to prominence on the basis of wealth and lineage while this in no way affected the lot of women in that society generally, nor is this an indication of improved opportunities for women - Indira Ghandi is a clear case in point.<sup>14</sup>

For most of the period under discussion, religion generally worked to women's advantage, since even the patriarchal strictures increasingly applied under Christianity did not really become restrictive until the Byzantine period in Africa. As pagan priestesses women were able to occupy respected roles outside that of being a wife and mother, and religious roles also facilitated women's benefactions, for which they were sometimes honoured with statues. The early centuries of Christianity, up to the time of Constantine, can be said to have facilitated the prominence of individual Roman African women, who rose to the fore as confessors and martyrs. The emphasis the Church placed on patriarchal authority did however undo some of the independence which women had gained under pagan conditions, but this did not really have a general impact (for example by legislation) until the Byzantine period.<sup>15</sup>

### **THE PORTRAIT OF PUDENTILLA**

It is against the realities and ideals presented by the evidence assembled in this study and summarized in the above paragraphs that the plausibility of the portrait of Pudentilla must be assessed. The defence of Apuleius depends in part on his presentation of Pudentilla as a woman of sound judgement and independent character. We are told that she was a well educated woman in both Latin and Greek, she was wealthy and a generous benefactor to the community, a devoted mother to her two sons, and an astute businesswoman in the management of her estates. All these aspects can in fact be confirmed by what we know of Roman African women from other sources. Other women from the Roman African context, such as the near contemporary Perpetua, were shown to be well educated. Some women, for example Antonia Saturnina or Augustine's African patroness, can be shown to have been the sole owners of estates, wealthy and autonomous - Fantham (1995: 224) goes so far as to compare Pudentilla directly to the mistress of the estate in the Julius mosaic

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<sup>14</sup> Indira Ghandi was the only child of Kamla and Jawaharlal Nehru, and in 1942 married Feroze Ghandi. Her father became prime minister after India's attainment of independence. In 1966 Mrs Indira Ghandi became the prime minister as a compromise candidate since the contenders for the position all thought that she could be easily controlled. She held the office until 1977, and again from 1980-1984, the year in which she was assassinated.

<sup>15</sup> See pp. 230-231.



illustrated above (Figure 11.3), who occupies a role equal in status to that of her husband. Most of these examples are situated in periods later than the second half of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century, but we do know that by Pudentilla's day Roman law and custom had been adjusted to such an extent that female property ownership and relative independence had become possible. There is plenty of evidence of devoted mothers in inscriptions, and even while we may take this as the representation of an ideal rather than a practical reality, mothers do appear to have attempted to assist their sons' political careers in their own ways. Generous benefactors to the community were also shown to be a real factor in the municipal lives of the Roman African cities, and such benefactions by women were often carried out for the benefit of the political careers of male relatives, as in the case of Pudentilla and Pontianus. We can therefore conclude that the picture which Apuleius paints of his wealthy wife is not unrealistic when taken against the backdrop of the urban and Romanized African élite. Admittedly it has no bearing at all on the rural or less Romanized women who formed the vast majority of the female population, and there can be no doubt that Pudentilla's assertive and independent role must be attributed to the influence of Roman civilization.

### **PARAMETERS OF THIS STUDY**

The limitations of the evidence were already made clear at the beginning of this study, and unfortunately it must be admitted that some pieces of this puzzle will probably always be missing. Apart from the account by Perpetua, we have no actual female author and our sources, epigraphical, literary and iconographical, could only yield a limited amount of evidence on the actuality of women's lives. In most cases we had to deal with a reality refracted through male eyes, which concerned itself more with ideals and their antitheses than with the minutiae of daily life and experience, of which we catch a mere glimpse in Perpetua's account. An assessment of the indigenous African influences on the role of women had to be deduced from traces in the Romanized evidence, since material evidence of African indigenous origins is minimal for the period under discussion. How much we can learn from contemporary oral traditions in Africa in the manner of Diop is also debatable.<sup>16</sup> For Punic influences some light could be shed by what is known of Phoenician traditions, but the rather wide generalisations assumed by Charles-Picard *et al* about the education and other attributes of Punic women on the basis of Sophonisba in the Graeco-Roman sources is of limited value, and we must concede that we know little about Punic women which is certain and culturally unbiased. The Vandals remain equally mysterious, since ancient historians and other writers mention them more in passing than with the purpose of giving an accurate portrait of their culture. At least on the Vandal and Byzantine period in Africa the minimal amount of information on women passed on by our sources gives us an *argumentum ex silentio*, perhaps suggesting that women were less involved in the power structures at this time. Our contemporary sources for the Byzantine period such as Maximus Confessor, for example are concentrated on Church politics, and despite the occasional interference of women like Lucilla in earlier times, such opportunities seem to have faded for North African women from the Vandal period onwards. The insecurity and unsettlement of the last three centuries in Roman

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<sup>16</sup> One of Diop's works has already been mentioned (p. 50 n.16). Other works by this author are: *Nations Nègres et culture* (Paris, 1955); *Antériorité des civilisations Nègres: mythe ou vérité historique?* (Paris, 1967); *Civilisation ou barbarie: anthropologie sans complaisance* (Paris, 1981); *L'Afrique noire précoloniale: étude comparée des systèmes politiques et sociaux de l'Europe et de l'Afrique noire, de l'antiquité à la formation des états modernes* (Paris, 1987); *Towards the African Renaissance: essays in African culture and development, 1946-1960* (London, 1996).



Africa, to which the numerous Byzantine forts bear witness, are also an indication of a focus on military matters, in which women in the Roman tradition played no active role. The only individual women we hear of during these times are those of relatively humble status and most probably of African descent - Dagila, the confessor mentioned by Victor Vitensis, or the Berber leader, the Kāhina, whose semi-legendary status ensured the survival of her name in the annals of Africa. The prominence of the Kāhina can also be explained by the fact that for the half century it took the Arabs to conquer North Africa, the lack of contemporary sources forces the modern historian to rely on later Arab writers, who focussed their heroic tales on the African Berbers rather than on the Byzantines.

### **THE CONTRIBUTIONS OF THIS STUDY**

When we regard the higher levels of Roman African society, at first glance there is not much which distinguishes them from municipal aristocracies elsewhere within the Roman Empire. This is certainly the impression created by the 1977 study done by Ladjimi-Sebaï on Roman African women. Ladjimi-Sebaï ends her thesis with a brief conclusion in which she does her best to laud the individuality of Roman African women while in the study itself the reader reaches the opposite conclusion. In part, of course, the criticism that the evidence shows little difference between women in Rome and Roman African women is quite valid. In many ways much of our evidence on Roman African women is so Roman that one is hard pressed to remember that these were Romans of African origin. But even this very Roman evidence from North Africa is not without value, since this information contributes to our understanding of the levels of Romanization in the various provinces of North Africa, to what extent this was superficial expediency or where Romanization became a more integral part of North African society, particularly for the élites of these cities. It also contributes to our knowledge of how, why and to what extent women participated in this process, something which has not been evaluated before the present study. Moreover, there are many indications of what lay beneath this Roman veneer, and how African and Punic traditions made themselves felt even in the highest social echelons. The evidence presented by women like Pudentilla, Antonia Saturnina or even Aelia Arisuth is a valuable indication of the impact of Roman civilization in the melting pot of diverse cultural influences felt in the Western Roman Empire.

In this study an attempt has also been made to pay attention to those who were less Romanized, and African influences become more apparent when we move down the ladder of status to the women for whom there was no obvious advantage in being Romanized. There we find traces of the indigenous African heritage, such as descent through the maternal line. For women's or gender studies this examination of the Roman African evidence is another piece in a large and complex puzzle, revealing the socio-political influences which shaped women's lives at different economic levels in ancient societies.

Most importantly, this study has made a contribution in projecting the voices of women over the centuries of Roman involvement with these African provinces, women from all levels of society, from the wealthy Pudentilla doing lessons with her sons to the vigorous spells of humble women like Septima and Domitiana, trying to draw their lovers. Through all the evidence collected here we may hear the voices of wives to their husbands, in quarrel, affection or blandishments, mothers to their sons; women calling their wares in the market place, and women in ritual lament; teachers in classrooms full of girls, and Christian confessors forgiving the sins of their



fellow men and women. Even though for much of this information we have to read between the lines, and use our sources with circumspection, women's voices can be heard. And let us not forget also their more direct contributions through the medium of epigraphy, where wives such as Cornelia Galla lamented the loss of loved ones.<sup>17</sup>

### **THE EUROCENTRIC PERSPECTIVE**

History, as Veyne (1987: 2) phrases it, is a journey into otherness. To imagine the people who once lived here in North Africa so many centuries ago, and to assess their lives from our modern perspective has been a task undertaken in the knowledge that the evidence would be viewed from a European or Western perspective. The view presented here has been that Roman civilization was, relatively speaking, advantageous to women, since it provided them with property rights and education, and the African tradition disadvantageous, because women had no access to these advantages. Scholars with other cultural backgrounds, however, may come to the opposite conclusion, arguing that women in the African tradition were less restricted, since they were not, for example, confined to the indoor life and its domestic activities - they accompanied the men to the battlefield where they built the stockades, or worked outdoors in the fields. Indeed, today scholars from an Islamic perspective argue that Western freedom for women is detrimental, citing for example research into the high incidence of teenage pregnancy among Western nations as one of the indictments of this freedom for women.<sup>18</sup> Essentially we are weighing the relative advantages of freedom as opposed to protection. It does not appear, however, that women of the pre-Arab African context were protected in the way that women are sheltered under Islamic custom. In fact, relatively speaking, Berber women seem to have enjoyed neither the protection nor the autonomy which was accorded to Roman(ized) women at different times in their history. Yet we cannot assume that women in indigenous tribal structures were without power, only because it was not as structured and official as male power. Unfortunately, however, the lack of evidence makes a different perspective from the one gained here rather difficult and certainly conjectural.

But whether the individuals were of Berber, Punic, Roman, Vandal or Byzantine extraction, the balance of power between men and women has always remained fluid, and much more subtle than the evidence will divulge, even upon examination. In this study, I have attempted to demonstrate the co-operative reciprocity between men and women to indicate that in Roman African antiquity this relationship was on the whole not as confrontational as is sometimes indicated by works on women in the ancient world, and that the Roman African women for whom we have the most evidence gained some balance between the constraints and liberties of their cultural environment. While we, like Veyne, are divided from our subject by time and may view the complex entity of the Roman African woman as 'other', influenced by many cultures and changing even within the period under discussion, for their male contemporaries her world was perhaps not quite as diametrically different from their own as it may seem from ours today, and men and women acted in unity rather than as adversaries.



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<sup>17</sup> See p. 114.

<sup>18</sup> See for example KHAN (1995): *Woman between Islam and western society*, 96.



# APPENDIX A

## WOMEN'S BENEFACTIONS AND HONOURS

N	REF. <sup>1</sup>	PLACE	DATE	NAME	FAMILY	STATUS OF WOMAN	OCCASION	HONOURS TO HER	BENEFACTIONS	APPR. COST IN HS.	OTHER INFORMATION
AFRICA PROCONSULARIS (INCLUDING TRIPOPLITANIA)											
1	CIL 25846; AE 1906, 35	Abitinae	Hadrian's reign	SEXTIA PEDUCAEA	daughter of Quintus Pedacaeus Spes	<i>fl.pp.</i> <i>Karthaginensium</i>	erects mausoleum in honour of her son, Longeius Q. Festus, equestrian and prefect of the cohort at Alexandria	none to her	none		her son is <i>pius, optimus, sanctissimus, dignissimus</i>
2	AE 1949, 36	Akouda	end of 2 <sup>nd</sup>	AVIDIA VITALIS	daughter of Gaius, wife of Cn Salvius Saturninus	<i>fl.pp. coloniae clarissima femina</i>	honorary statue	dedication of a statue to her, <i>ob merita</i>	<i>ob merita???</i>		
3	CIL 16472 ILT 1647	Althiburos	AD 2	COMINIA PATERCULA	wife of M. Helvius Melior Plac. Sab. Sam., <i>sacerdotalis provinciae</i> ; mother of Q. Helvius Melior Plac. Cominiani	priv. cit.	honorary statue	she is honoured by the <i>curiales</i> of the Xth curia with a statue <i>ob merita, actores</i> gave a banquet on the occasion of the dedication	<i>ob merita???</i>	-	a statue was also erected for her husband CIL 1828 The patronage of a provincial priest would have been sought by a number of communities
4	AE 1993, 1748	Ammaedara	3 <sup>rd</sup>	RANIA FLAVIA	mother of the Flavii, <i>clarissimi pueri</i>	<i>c.f.</i>	honorary	town honours Rania Flavia as <i>patrona</i>	her benefactions not specified		
5	Benzina ben Abdallah (1977)	Ammaedara	3 <sup>rd</sup>	FLAVIA [...]	daughter of Titus Flavius	<i>equestrian</i>	honorary	the <i>ordo</i> honours her for her generosity towards the <i>ordo</i> and the people of the colony	<i>ob merita et insignem singularemque munificentiam eius</i>	?	
6	ILA 182	Ammaedara	198-211	IULIA VICTORINA	wife of Secundus and mother of [...]	<i>priv. cit.</i>	dedication to the imperial family	-	Iulia and [...] built or renovated (?) the temple of Saturn and Ops at their own cost	100 000 Thugga same period [CIL 26498]	
7	CIL 11547 = 361	Ammaedara	?	CORNELIA LICINIA	<i>filiis pii</i> (not named)	<i>sacerdos Cererum publica (?)</i>	epitaph	base for honorary statue	none mentioned		
8	CIL 12317 = 23888	Bisica Lucana	180-200	MODIA QUINTIA	daughter of Quintus	<i>fla. pp.</i>	her benefaction <i>ob honorem flaminicatus</i> ; statue <i>pecunia publicam</i> for her munificence	she is honoured by a statue out of city funds for her expenditure	adorns colonnade with panelled ceilings, marble pavements and columns, paid with additional money over and above the original promise ( <i>summa honoraria + adiecta</i> ).	?	<i>taxatio legitima</i> = <i>summa legitima</i> (see also discussion by Gamsey (1971: 127-128))

<sup>1</sup> Apart from the immediate reference information given in column 2, further references to these inscriptions can be found in Bassignano (1974), Duncan-Jones (1974) and Wesch-Klein (1990).

<sup>2</sup> Costs for women's expenditure given in italics have been estimated from the figures for (a) similar buildings, statues, events or (b) similar offices and *summa honoraria*, given in DUNCAN-JONES (1974). *The economy of the Roman Empire - Quantitative studies* (= DJ).



9	CIL 954	Bled Djedida	end 2 <sup>nd</sup>	ALBIA [...]	daughter of Marcus	not mentioned	Q Pompeius Balbus dedicates building	-	building started by <i>avia Albia</i> ; probably completed by granddaughter [...]	?	Q Pompeius Balbus dedicates; relation to woman unknown
10	CIL 25530	Bulla Regia	2 <sup>nd</sup> to 3 <sup>rd</sup>	MINIA PROCULA	wife of C. Sallustius Dexter; mother of C. Sallustius Praenestinus	<i>fla. pp (?)</i>	son erects statue; decurial decree	<i>matri optima</i>	-		
11	ILA 454	Bulla Regia	beg. 3 <sup>rd</sup>	IULIA MEMMIA PRISCA RUFA AEMILIANA FIDIANA	daughter of the consul Gaius Memmius Iulius Albius	<i>c.f.</i>	honorary	honorary inscription on account of the outstanding magnificence of her work, the baths	the baths and their decoration, [gymnasium and further monies]	400 000 at Thagura [CIL 28065]	
12	CIL 14470	Bulla Regia	late 3 <sup>rd</sup>	ARADIA ROSCIA CALPURNIA PURGILLA	daughter of P. Arcadius Roscius Fufinus Saturninus Tiberianicus	<i>c.f.</i>	honorary	town honours their <i>patrona</i>	not specified	?	
13	CIL 14472 = 10580	Bulla Regia	?	VALERIA CONCESSA	daughter of Lucius; two sons	<i>sacerdos publica Cererum</i>	dedication of honorary statue to Valeria	honorary statue voted to Valeria by the <i>ordo</i> , base paid for by her two sons	none mentioned		
14	CIL 5328	Calama	211-212	VIBIA AURELIA SABINA	daughter of Marcus	<i>c.f.</i>	honorary	town honours V.A. for her generosity	not specified	?	
15	CIL 5365 = 17495 ILAlg I, 286	Calama	161-211	ANNIA AELIA RESTITUTA	daughter of L. Annius Aelius Clemens, <i>fl. Aug.</i>	<i>fla. pp.</i>	honorary dedication to Annia <i>ob insignem liberalitatem pollicitationis</i>	5 statues erected from public treasury in honour of A.A.R. 1 statue for her father	<i>pollicitatio</i> : sum for theatre	theatre = 400.000	fr. was a fl. Aug.; note that he only merits 1 statue theatre at Madauros = 375 000
16	CIL 5366 ILAlg I, 287	Calama	161-211	ANNIA AELIA	daughter of Lucius	<i>fla. Augustorum pp.</i>	honorary dedication to Annia <i>ob egregium liberalitatem</i>	5 statues erected with public money	promise to build theatre <i>sua pecunia</i>		'Augustorum' was added to her title here
17	CIL 1344 & 25853	Chidibbia	2 <sup>nd</sup> to 3 <sup>rd</sup>	[...]	[...]	<i>fla. pp.</i>	[...]	[...]	<i>summa honoraria</i> , some (interest?) to be used for erect./renov./decor. of buildings	4 000	
18	CIL 211	Cillium	2 <sup>nd</sup>	AEMILIA PACATA	daughter of Sextus; wife of Titus Flavius Secundus, <i>fl.</i>	<i>fla. pp.</i>	epitaph to his wife	-	none mentioned		
19				FLAVIA PACATA	daughter of Titus Flavius Secundus, <i>fl.</i>	<i>Fl. pp. col Thelept.</i>	epitaph for daughter	Flavia Libera, second wife of T.F.S. erects a statue for her stepdaughter	none		Flavia Pacata died at age 15
20	ILAlg I 3838	Denirat, Hr.	end 2 <sup>nd</sup> / 3 <sup>rd</sup>	POSTIMIA LUCILLA POSTIMIANA	? related ? to Titus Octavius?	none mentioned	dedication to Minerva and Jupiter	-	building or renov. of temple to Minerva & Jupiter; <i>cum Postimia Lucilla (?) Postimiana ipse dedicavit</i>		
21	CIL 25430	El Arous, Hr.	2 <sup>nd</sup> / 3 <sup>rd</sup>	..JA NABIRA	<i>avia eorum</i> ....	-	restoration of temple	grandchildren restore	<i>avia Nabira</i> builds the temple; grandchildren restore temple and add steps <i>sua pecunia</i>	original costs: ? 8000 + for restor.	
22	AE 1992, 1835	Fedhala, Qued	222-235	IULIA FAUSTINA	wife of Lucius, son of Maximus	<i>fla. [...]</i>	epitaph?	none mentioned	none mentioned	-	



2 3	CIL 12031	Furnos Matius	198-211 AD	SEXTILIA P[.]	[...]	—	dedic. of ? to imperial family	none mentioned	building(?) erected; dedicated by ? & Sextilia		
2 4	CIL 23834	Gales	end 2 <sup>nd</sup>	QUARTA	daughter of Nyptan, wife of Celer	<i>sacerda magna, probably of Ceres</i>	dedication of monument	none mentioned	constructs monument at her own cost	?	the builders and overseers are also mentioned in the text
2 5	CIL 27413	Civitas Geurmitanoru m	2 <sup>nd</sup> or 3 <sup>rd</sup>	IULIA CRESCENTIA	[...]	—	dedication of building	—	building completed and dedic. by Iulia for the cit. of Geurmit.; banquet for decurions	?	
2 6	CIL 22695 ILT 21	Gigthis	2 <sup>nd</sup> or 3 <sup>rd</sup>	VALERIA PAULINA	wife of C. Servilius Plautus, of the Quirine tribe, <i>fl.pp.</i>	<i>fla. pp</i>	dedication to Mercury Augustus, in honour of his flaminate and that of his wife	statue? erected LDD	statue? dedicated to Mercury Augustus by husband and wife	?	husband's family well known for <i>liberalitas</i>
2 7	CIL 12422	Gori	end 2 <sup>nd</sup> - 3 <sup>rd</sup>	MARIA VICTORIA	daughter of Marius Marinus; wife of Ofellius Primus, <i>fl. pp.</i>	none mentioned	dedication of a statue to her father	—	statue for father's <i>liberalitas</i> by the ordo taken over by daughter <i>titulo et loco contenta sua pecunia posuit</i> ; banquet together with husband on dedication	?	
2 8	ILTun 769	Gori	3 <sup>rd</sup>	MARIA [...] C...	wife of Marius [...]; mother of C. Marius Caecilius	priv. cit.	dedication in honour of son's decurionate by Maria and husband	none for her	parents erect statue to son, <i>pollicitatio</i> ; interest for boxing; banquet for decurions	capital 10 000	
2 9	CIL 15373	Gotnia	?	IUNIA SATURNINA	daughter of Marcus	<i>fla. [...]</i>	?	?	?		
3 0	CIL 16910 ILAlg I, 562	Guela bou Attane	?	IULIA CELSINA SENIOR	daughter of Victor Agrippianus, equestrian and priest of Liber Pater; granddaughter of Domitius Victor	<i>fla. pp.</i>	dedication by her father and Felix Victorianus	none	none by her		
3 1	CIL 11178	Harrat, Hr. (Segernes valley)	2 <sup>nd</sup> or 3 <sup>rd</sup>	GAR(GILIA) FORTUNATA	wife of [...]	<i>fl. pp.</i>	dedication to deceased husband	none	erects statue at own cost LDDD	?	
3 2	AE 1955, 152	Hippo Regius	2 <sup>nd</sup> / 3 <sup>rd</sup>	VIBIA SEV[ERA]	daughter of [...]	priv. cit.	dedication of statue to father	none for her	takes over the statue for her father <i>honore contenta</i> ; interest from capital for <i>sportulae</i> for decurions; annual banquet in mem. of father for <i>Augustales</i>	?	
3 3	AE 1958, 144	Hippo Regius	2/ beg. 3 <sup>rd</sup>	MARIA HONORATIANA	daughter of ?, wife of Q. Aurelius Honoratus, benef., <i>fl. pp.</i>	<i>fla. pp.</i>	testament donation by husband to commem. her birthday	husband donates capital by test. in mem. of wife; <i>epulum</i> for decurions, curiales and <i>Augustales</i>	none by her	100 000 for the commemoration and <i>epulum</i>	
3 4	CIL 23; IRT 746	Lepcis Magna	1 <sup>st</sup>	?	wife of L. Tettius Cornus, freedman	priv. cit.	?	—	a cistern built by man and wife	?	
3 5	IRT 370	Lepcis Magna	152-3	CALPURNIA HONESTA	none mentioned	not mentioned	temple/exhedra built	—	temple built <i>sua pecunia</i>	?	
3 6	IRT 371	Lepcis Magna	152-153	CALPURNIA [HONESTA]	daughter of Quintus	?	[...]	none mentioned	[ <i>sua pecunia fecit</i> ]	-	



37	IRT 587 & 632	Lepcis Magna	Severan period?	AQUILIA BLAESILLA	mother of C. Aelius Rufinus, <i>fl.</i>	priv. cit.	dedication (in honour of son's flaminate?) to Minerva and Mercury	–	schola dedicated to Minerva and Mercury	?	reference and plan of the structure in Bandinelli (1966: figure 245)
38	IRT 632	Lepcis Magna	Severan period?	AQUILIA BLAESILLA	mother of Q. Plautus Haterianus	priv. cit.	son dedicates from brother's testament	son honours mother from brother's testament	–		Tiberius Plautus Lupus, brother of Q. Plautus Haterianus
39	IRT 707	Lepcis Magna	2 <sup>nd</sup> / 3 <sup>rd</sup>	IULI(??)A PARATA	daughter of Gaetulix/eus, heir of Q.M. Vitalis	priv. cit.	temple by testament of Q.M. Vitalis	–	as heir of Q.M. Vitalis executed bequest of temple to Apollo; paving by heiress <i>amplius adiectis</i> from her own funds	temple = 200.000; <i>amplius adiectis</i> = 72.500	
40	Bandinelli 1966: 58	Lepcis Magna	1 <sup>st</sup> AD	SUPHUNIBAL	daughter of Annobal Ruso	priv. cit.	shrine to Ceres dedicated	?	shrine to Ceres built	80 000 at Lepcis, same period [IRT 348]	
41	CIL 22902	Lepti Minus	?	MARCIA POMPEIANA	daughter of Sextus, wife of Marcus Nonius Capito, <i>fl.</i> (?)	<i>fla. pp.</i>	dedication of honorary statue to her	honorary statue by M. Caecilius Lurianus and P. Postumius Marianus <i>optima femina</i>	none mentioned		husband also receives honorary statue by the same dedicators [CIL 22903]
42	CIL 23405	Mactaris	2 <sup>nd</sup>	TERENTIA SPERATA	[...]	<i>sacerdos</i> , probably of Venus	dedication to Venus Augusta and to the health of imperial family of Septimius Severus	–	altar erected - <i>votum solvit libens animo</i>	1000 - 140 DJ, 102	Venus a public cult here
43	ILAlg I, 2224	Madauros	2 <sup>nd</sup> to 3 <sup>rd</sup>	BENINIA SATURNINA SOFENIA	wife of a priest of Pluto	<i>fla. pp.</i> (?)	epitaph	<i>sobria pia vixit</i>	none mentioned		
44	ILAlg I, 2056	Madauros	2 <sup>nd</sup> / 3 <sup>rd</sup>	VIRIA POMPONILLA	connec. with M. Antonius Martialis Valerianus, <i>fl. pp.</i> ?	priv. cit.	dedication of altar	–	V.P. & Valerianus restore entrance and entrance hall, all decor., and wall; dedicate altar together with children	?	
45	ILAlg I, 2052	Madauros	2 <sup>nd</sup> / 3 <sup>rd</sup>	L. IURATA	wife of Q. Calpurnius Donatus	priv. cit.	dedication of a market and paving	–	dedication by Q.C. Donatus together with wife & 2 others.	30 000 at Cuicul [AE 1916, 36] 1 <sup>st</sup> AD	
46	ILAlg I, 2071	Madauros	2 <sup>nd</sup> / 3 <sup>rd</sup>	TERENTIA BONIFATIA; other three women probably did not contribute	12 male priests under a <i>flamen</i> also mentioned in the inscription	<i>canistraria</i> in Bellona cult	servers of Bellona together built steps and two [statues or altars]; names of other woman incl. to represent entire body of servants of the goddess	none	steps and [altars or statues] built by attendants of Bellona		Virtus = Bellona = Ma
47	ILAlg I, 2134	Madauros	2 <sup>nd</sup> / 3 <sup>rd</sup>	[...]	daughter of [...]	?	atrium restoration	–	temple atrium and <i>aedicula</i> restored by [...] with <i>quadrato lapide suis sumptibus</i> ; dedicated together with father?	?	
48	ILAlg I, 2033	Madauros	?	IULIA VICTORIA	none mentioned	<i>canistraria</i> of Ceres	dedication of Ceres statue	none	erects statue <i>sua pecunia</i> and makes dedication	7100 at Madauros [ILAlg I. 2152]	



49	ILAlg I, 2145	Madauros	first third of 3 <sup>rd</sup>	CORNELIA ROMANILLA POSTUMANA, VICTORINA CLAUDIANA, EULOGIA ROMANILLA	daughters and heirs of M. Cornelius Fronto	priv. cit.	dedication of statue to honour father	father is honoured by his daughters, the heirs.	statue decreed by <i>ordo et populus</i> taken over by daughters at their cost; give <i>sportulae</i> to decurions and curiales	7100 at Madauros [ILAlg I, 2152] + ?	
50	ILAlg I, 2146	Madauros	?	FILICINIA SECURA	wife of flamen, aedile and duumvir [...]	priestess of the Capitol together with her husband	dedication in honour of son's priesthood	–	F.S. erects a statue (?), together with husband	7100 at Madauros [ILAlg I, 2152]	location given by decurial decree
51	CIL 25836	Membressa	275-6	NONIA L.]	wife of Q. Numisius Primus	?	dedication of temple	–	<i>promissio</i> of temple by husband, completed by wife and sons; together also held boxing match at dedic.	temple ex 16 000	
52	CIL 17458	Merdes Hr.	2 <sup>nd</sup> to 3 <sup>rd</sup>	MUNATIA CASTULA	daughter of Munatius Festus	<i>fla.pp. munic Thuburs.</i>	epitaph	none mentioned	none mentioned		
53	CIL 12353	Municipium Aurelium	after 180	GALLIA OPTATA	wife of P. Modius Felix	priv. cit.	honorary	<i>ad remunerandam liberalitatem</i> of her husband	she is honoured for her husband's benefactions		
54	CIL 15 576	Mustis	164	... HONORATA	sister of Potitus Natale(?)	priv. cit.	dedication of temple of Fortuna Augusta	–	Honorata & brother inherit obligation to complete the temple; dedication with <i>sportulae</i> , <i>epulum</i> and <i>gymnasium</i>	70 000	
55	CIL 1578	Mustis	early 3 <sup>rd</sup>	MARIA LUCINA	mother of L. Fulvius Kastus Fulvianus & Lucius [...] Fulvius	<i>fla.</i>	dedication of a monument to Elagabalus and Julia Soaemias	for the honour of the flamine	together with sons - <i>liberalitas</i> + <i>adlectio</i> ; <i>sportulae</i> for decurions; banquet for <i>cives</i> on the day of the dedication	<i>adlectio</i> = 10 000 nr of dec.s in Mustis = 63-100, so at least 20 000 spent	
56	AE 1968, 591	Mustis	218	ORFIA FORTUNATA	daughter of Marcus	priv. cit. freedwoman	dedic. of temple to Mercury on flamine of L. Nonius Rogatianus Honoratianus	–	dedicated with Orfia and other <i>liberti</i> ; banquet to curia on dedication		
57	AE 1968, 588	Mustis	222-235	IULIA	daughter of Quintus, <i>fl.</i> ; equestrian family	<i>fla.</i>	testamentary, in honour of her flamine	–	<i>munus</i> given by Iulia <i>imitata parentes maioresque</i> ; sum for the curia Augusta; annual banquet from interest; on her death she orders a banquet for curiae on dedic. of statue to Ceres		mentions her father's benefactions on his <i>fl.</i> ; her vow carried out partly by brother and sons, the heirs
58	CIL 12058	Muzuc	after 180	CLODIA MACRINA	granddaughter of C. Clodius Saturninus	<i>c.f.</i>	dedication of temple of Apollo, promised by grandfather	–	temple of Apollo + decor + statues	12 000 (incl. 6400 <i>summa honoraria</i> )	
59	CIL 12067	Muzuc	2 <sup>nd</sup> / 3 <sup>rd</sup>	PLAUTIA EP...	her heirs, Plautus Faustus and Plautus Auge	<i>fla. pp.</i>	testamentary, <i>ob hon. flam. pp.</i>	her heirs have completed the temple by augmenting the sum promised	temple and statues	10 000 + 2000	<i>summa honoraria</i> for flamine in Muzuc = 12 000
60	CIL 26121	Numluli	169-170	IUNIA SATURNINA	wife of L. Memmius Marcellinus Pecuarianus; mother of L. Memmius Marcellus Pecuarianus, <i>fl. divi Nerae designatus</i>	<i>fla.</i>	dedication of the Capitol temple; <i>ob hon. fl. uxoris</i>	honoured by husband on occasion of her flamine, by decurial decree	temple and its decoration by husband and son; on dedication, <i>sportulae</i> , <i>epulum</i> , oil for gymnasium and <i>ludi scaenici</i>	24 000	



6 1	CIL 15373	near Numluli	169-170	IUNIA SATURNINA	daughter of Marcus	<i>fla.</i>	[....]	[....]	?		
6 2	CIL 15417	Numluli	?	[.....]	?	<i>fla. pp.</i>	epitaph	[.....]	?		
6 3	IRT 91	Sabratha	169/170	[ANICIA] PUDENTILLA & MANLIA MACRINA	M.M. is the mother and heir of A.P.	priv. citizens	honorary dedication made on the order of the proconsul of Africa for Anicia Pudentilla	Anicia Pudentilla is honoured, <i>ob merita erga rem publicam</i> ; statue (?) paid for by her mother and heir	<i>erga rem publicam</i> ??	?	L. Fulvius Pompina Rusticus C. Brutus, proconsul from 165-168 [CIL 10.408]
6 4	CIL 11216 = 937	Seressitanum	2 <sup>nd</sup> / 3 <sup>rd</sup>	BEBENIA PAULIANA & ARMENIA AUGUE	mother and sister of C. Memmius Felix Armenianus	priv. citizens	additions to the arch built by Memmius Felix	testamentary obligation	ornamentation of his arch by mother and sister - <i>liberalitas</i> ; on day of dedic. <i>sportulae</i> for decurions; banquet & oil for cit* of municipia	25 000 for decor. of arch	the municipia gave public money for a chariot for the arch.
6 5	CIL 1623	Sicca Veneria	2 <sup>nd</sup> to 3 <sup>rd</sup>	VALERIA SATURNINA & VALERIA MAIOR	none mentioned	<i>priestess of Ceres fla.</i>	dedication to Ceres	-	altar	1000 - 140 DJ, 102	
6 6	CIL 1648	Sicca Veneria	2 <sup>nd</sup> / 3 <sup>rd</sup>	AEMILIA CERREALIS	daughter of Lucius; granddaughter of Quintus Cassius	priv. cit.	famine eased by Q. Cassius <i>sua pecunia</i> ; statue to honour him	none to her	pays for the statue to honour grandfather	?	
6 7	CIL 12143 = 712	Sidi Amara, Hr.	211	FIRMIA	daughter of Marcus	priv. cit.?	dedication to the emperors	-	porico and statues begun by Firmia and completed by heirs	?	
6 8	CIL 25489	Sidi Salah el Balthi, Hr.	2 <sup>nd</sup> / 3 <sup>rd</sup>	VALERIA MAXIMA	daughter of Quintus	priv. cit.	adornment of building	?	adornment of a building (?) <i>sua pec.</i>		
6 9	CIL 25490	Sidi Salah el Balthi, Hr.	?	[....]	[.....]	<i>fla. pp. designata</i>	dedication of ? building or statue	<i>decreto decurionum</i>	<i>sua pecunia fecit et dedicavit</i>		
7 0	CIL 993 ILS 4433	Soliman	2 <sup>nd</sup> to 3 <sup>rd</sup>	CASSIA MAXIMULA	wife of Sextilius Martialis, <i>sacerdos publicus, omnibus honoribus functus</i> ; her son was flamen and aedile	<i>fla. Dvae Plotinae</i>	dedication of Caelestis temple	her vow (= <i>pollicitatio</i> ) is fulfilled by her husband and son	temple of Caelestis vowed by C.M.; completed with marble ornamentation, mosaics, a statue of Pudicitia Augusta and a bust of Caelestis; on day of dedication, <i>sportulae</i> to decurions		
7 1	ILA 123	Sufetula	?	[..]ESI..A	[.....]	<i>sacerda</i>	[....]	-	<i>donum fecit</i> together with Urbanus, also <i>sacerdos</i>	?	
7 2	ILA 300 AE 1910, 154	Sutunurca	146	QUINTA	daughter of Germanus son of Passus	<i>fla. pp.</i>	dedication to Hadrian. <i>ob honorem flamonii perpetui</i>	her father donates a statue for his daughter being elected to the flammate = <i>summa honoraria</i> ; <i>adiectio</i> for meat to the people and oil for the gymnasium	-	<i>summa legitima</i> = 4000 <i>adiectio</i> = 1425	
7 3	CIL 8993 ILS 1200	Taksebt	?	FABATIA POLLA FABIA DOMITIA GELLIOLA	daughter of Lucius	<i>lampadifera</i> in cult of Ceres	honorary dedication to <i>patrona</i>	honoured by freedman as <i>patrona</i>	-		
7 4	AE 1935, 39	Thagura	?	ANTEIA ADAUTA	wife of M. Pusilius Securus	<i>fla. pp.</i>	dedication to Ceres Maurusia Augusta	-	altar dedicated	1000 - 140 DJ, 102	
7 5	ILA/g 1, 1040	Thagura	?	[...JA	[.....]	<i>fla. pp.</i>	dedication of a statue	dedication of a statue either by or for the <i>fla. pp</i> [.....]		-	



7 6	CIL 16555	Theveste	164	AELIA BENEAUCXIDE	wife of Q. Titinus Securus, <i>munerarius</i>	priv. cit.	honorary	honorary dedication to husband and wife by the curiae <i>universae</i> and the Augustales; <i>sportulae</i> on dedic. of statue to her (by fam?)			all husband's titles are mentioned
7 7	CIL 16559	Theveste	164	TITINIA IULIA	daughter of Q. Titinus Securus	priv. cit.	honorary statue	dedic. of statue to daughter by <i>curiae universae</i> and Augustales; [...]	?	?	all father's titles mentioned
7 8	CIL 16560	Theveste	2 <sup>nd</sup> / early 3 <sup>rd</sup>	AURELIA SALVILLA	wife of M Valerius Flavianus Sabinianus	priv. cit.	husband and wife honoured	husband and wife are honoured; <i>ob innocentiam honorum et simplicem vitam</i> ;	?	?	
7 9	CIL 16556	Theveste	2 <sup>nd</sup> / early 3 <sup>rd</sup>	AURELIA IANUARIA	daughter of Exceptus; wife of Q. Crepereus Rufinus	priv. cit.	honorary for husband and wife	statues erected by curiae <i>universae</i> and Augustales <i>ob insignem eius vitam quietamque disciplinam</i> and for munera	16 000 gladiatorial fights at Smirat, same period		
8 0	ILA 511	Thibaris	3 <sup>rd</sup>	SEIA POTTITA	daughter of Roscius Potitus Memmianus	c.f.	honorary	town honours S.P. for her <i>liberalitas</i>	?		
8 1	AE 1995, 1653	Thibica	3 <sup>rd</sup>	CALPURNIA CEIA AEMILIANA	wife of Q. Adadus Rufinus, c.v.	c.f.	honorary	<i>civitas</i> honours Calpurnia as <i>patrona</i>	benefactions not mentioned		
8 2	CIL 15205 = 1418	Thignica	2 <sup>nd</sup> / early 3 <sup>rd</sup>	CAECILIA	sister of Memmius Felix Sabinianus & Q. Memmius Rufus Fortunatianus	priv. cit.	<i>res publica</i> honours the Memmi and Donatus for their contributions to town	honours his sister, brother and [...] (sons ?)	statues placed in the forum for brother, sister and [...] (sons ?)		
8 3	CIL 1271 ILT 1277	Thisiduo	?	HERENNIA QUARTA	..... (equestrian family)	<i>fla.pp.</i>	<i>ob honorem</i>	[...]	[...]		
8 4	ILA 238	Thuburbo Maus	129-138	IULIA [...]	wife of Lucius Extricator	-	husband, as priest of Ceres, dedicates temple	-	also in name of wife and sons; temple and decoration	?	
8 5	ILA 240	Thuburbo Maus	?	IULIA [...]	.....(possibly the wife of the centurion of the legion)	<i>fla.pp.</i>	dedication to the <i>genius</i> of the municipium		husband's testamentary wish executed by Iulia	5000	possibly the same as Iulia Bassilia below
8 6	ILA 280	Thuburbo Maus	176-180	IULIA BASSILIA	mother of Publius Atrius Extricator	<i>fla.pp.</i>	honorary	erection of statue at public cost, by decree of decurions, honouring the son for the munificence of his mother	<i>ob honestam munificentiam</i> , but not specified	?	
8 7	ILT 718	Thuburbo Maus	213	....	....	<i>fla.</i>	text incomplete: a testamentary dedication <i>ob honorem flaminicatus</i>	-	on day of dedication, <i>sportulae</i> and gymnasias (oil)	?	dedication to be completed by heirs?
8 8	ILA 242	Thuburbo Maus	2 <sup>nd</sup> / 3 <sup>rd</sup>	AUFIDIA QUARTILLA	wife of [...] Celer		husband as priest dedicates hall with statue and decor	-	hall, statue, decoration also in name of wife	?	



8 9	ILA 284	Thuburbo Maius	2 <sup>nd</sup> / 3 <sup>rd</sup>	VENIDIA QUARTILLA	[...]	[...]	dedic. of temple and [...]	—	[...] donates temple together with V. Q. and Iulius Secundus; <i>ob</i> <i>dedicationem</i> [...]	?		
9 0	ILT 718	Thuburbo Maius	Caracalla	[...]	[...]	<i>fla.</i>	dedication to emperor and wife	<i>ob honorem flammicatus</i>	dedication of a statue			
9 1	ILA 414	Thuburbo Minus	3 <sup>rd</sup>	AELIA CELSINILLA	daughter of Agrius Celsinianus	<i>c.f.</i>	honorary dedication	town honour: <i>patrona</i>	benefactions not specified	?		
9 2	CIL 14690 ILS 4484	Thuburnica	Caracalla	LUCILIA CALE	none mentioned	<i>fla.</i> of the colonia of Thuburnica	dedication to Mercury Sobrius, Genius Sesase, Augustan pantheon	—	erects temple at own cost and of her own free will, in fulfilment of a vow	120 0000 temple to mercury, <i>CIL</i> Thugga [CIL 26482]		
9 3	AE 1951, 81	Thuburnica	early 2 <sup>nd</sup>	CANINIA TERTIA	daughter of Lucius; wife of Q. Furfanius Bellicus, <i>fl. pp. of Aug.</i>	<i>fla. Augusti/ Augustae perpetuae</i>	dedication to Gaius Marius, the founder of the colonia	husband erects building (?) in her name	—		her father and her son were <i>flamines</i>	
9 4	ILA 477	Thuburnica	?	MUNATIA FORTUNATA	daughter of Quintus	<i>fla. pp. coloniae suae</i>	epitaph	none mentioned	none mentioned			
9 5	CIL 26071	Thubursicum Bure	?	IULIA CANDIDA	wife of L. Volummius Honoratus, <i>fl.</i> <i>pp. (?)</i>	<i>fla. pp.</i>	epitaph	none mentioned	none mentioned			
9 6	CIL 1463	Thubursicum Bure	2 <sup>nd</sup> / early 3 <sup>rd</sup>	BONIFATIA	wife of T. Palatius Honoratus	priv. cit.	dedication; testamentary	—	temple & decor. financed <i>ex</i> <i>testamento</i> ; wife executes testamentary wish (?)	20 000 for temple		
9 7	ILAtg I 1298	Thubursicum Numidarum	?	SALLUSTIA NOBILIA	none mentioned	<i>fla. pp.</i>	honorary; <i>ob merita</i>	the curiales collected money for a statue; <i>ob merita</i>	possibly generosity towards the <i>curiales</i>	?		
9 8	ILAtg I 1256	Thubursicu Numidarum	202-205	not mentioned by name	wife of M. Fabius Laetus, <i>fl. pp.</i>	priv. cit.	dedication to Saturn	—	M.F.L. dedic. arch & decor for temple of Saturn together with wife and children.	?		
9 9	CIL 26628 ILA 540	Thugga	3 <sup>rd</sup>	IULIA MAXIMA	her sons [...]	<i>fla. pp.</i>	honorary, through her sons	<i>ob insignem splendorem filiorum</i>	—			
1 0 0	AE 1969/ 70, 648	Thugga	1 <sup>st</sup> AD	LICINIA PRISCA	freedwoman of M. Licinius Rufus, patron of the <i>pagus</i>	<i>liberta</i>	<i>liberti</i> honouring a vow to their patron	—	<i>liberti</i> of Rufus build <i>cellam</i> <i>cum porticibus et columnas</i> <i>lapi(?) deas.</i>	?		
1 0 1	AE 1969/ 70, 649	Thugga	1 <sup>st</sup> AD	LICINIA PRISCA	wife of M. Licinius Tyrannus, <i>libertus</i> ; freedwoman of M. Licinius Rufus	<i>fla. pp</i> ; <i>liberta</i>	dedication of temple to Ceres	—	M. Licinius Rufus donated and dedic. temple to Ceres as patron of town; his (ex) slaves with their money contributed cella and portico	10000 DI, 93		
1 0 2	AE 1969/70, 650 CIL 26525	Thugga	Claudius/ Nero	LICINIA PRISCA	freedwoman of Marcus	<i>liberta, fla. pp.</i>	dedication of temple to Fortuna Augusta, Venus and Concordia, for health of patron M. Licinius Rufus	—	<i>templum sua pecunia</i> <i>faciendum curavit idemque</i> <i>dedicavit.</i>	70 000		



103	AE 1969/70, 651	Thugga	1 <sup>st</sup> AD	VIRIA RUSTICA	grandmother of M. Licinius Rufus, <i>flamen pp. Aug.</i>	priv. cit.	renovations to structure of Viria Rustica by M. Licinius Tyrannus, <i>libertus</i> of M.L.R.	–	Viria Rustica erected the original temple of Caesar in honour of Tiberius	?	it appears that at this time freedmen still felt duty bound to keep up the building. Possibly they saw opportunities for social advancement in it.
104	CIL 26 589	Thugga	180-205	ASICIA VICTORIA	wife of M. Vibius Felix Marcianus; Ascius Adjutor was possibly her father or brother	[...]	honorary statue for Ascius Adjutor by public decree	–	paid for statue/ base		
105	CIL 26590 = 1495	Thugga	c.205	ASICIA VICTORIA and daughter, VIBIA ASICIANES	none mentioned	<i>fla.</i> ; her daughter also <i>fla.</i>	honorary for Asicia Victoria	honorary base erected by the citizens of Thugga <i>ob munificentiam (sic) et singularem liberalitatem eius</i>	Asicia made a donation on the occasion of her daughter becoming <i>fla.pp.</i> the revenue of the money was used for <i>ludi scaenici</i> and <i>sportulae</i> for the decurions	100 000	
106	CIL 26 591 A B	Thugga	201-210	VIBIA ASICIANES ASICIA VICTORIA	wife of A[.....]	<i>fla.pp.</i> none mentioned	honorary honorary	the municipium of Thugga erects a statue to her on order of the decurions honorary statue to her, erected by the decurions <i>ob munificentiam liberalem et singularem in civitatem et patriam suam</i>	none mentioned donation in honour of daughter's <i>fla.</i> ; the revenue for <i>sportulae</i> for the decurions, a banquet for the <i>curiae</i> , and for the citizens stage performances and gymnasia	? 100 000	
107	CIL 26 593 ILA 534	Thugga	c.205	ASICIA VICTORIA	none mentioned	<i>fla.pp.</i> equestrian status	dedication of bronze balustrades for rostra	city treasury supplements A. V.'s donation by four balustrades	<i>pollicitatio</i> - donation for bronze balustrades for rostra	20 000, but this sum had to be supplemented by the town	done posthumously; it is usually the heirs which fulfill the promise or make up the outstanding amount, not the public treasury; additional honour for her
108	CIL 26 471	Thugga	119-128	MJAEDIA LENTULA	daughter of Q. Maedius Severus, <i>patronus pagi et civitatis</i>	<i>fla.pp.</i>	dedication to Fortuna Augusta, Venus and Concordia	–	father and daughter promise money for temple <i>nomine suo et M. L.; ampliata pecunia</i> for decor.	70 000 + <i>adlectio</i> for decoration	
109	ILT 1511	Thugga	117-138	GABINIA BEATA	wife of Aulus Gabinius Datus, <i>fl.pp.</i> ; <i>avia piissima</i> of Q. Marius Rufinus	priv. cit.	honorary	<i>ob merita</i> , erected by the 2 <i>curatores Gabinis</i> (family)	<i>ob merita?</i>		family donated actively
110	ILA 521	Thugga	145-161	PROCESSA	daughter of Q. Gabinius Felix Faustianus	priv. cit.	dedication of portico on western Forum	–	portico together with father and brother	?	
111	CIL 26 458	Thugga	222-235	AVILLIA GABINIA VENUSTA	mother of Q. Gabinius Rufus Felix Beatus	priv. cit.	son dedicates Caelestis temple	son builds temple partly in mem. of mother and father's testamentary generosity to the town	Avillia donates capital by testament, the interest for <i>ludi &amp; sportulae</i>	?	



1	CIL 26 490	Thugga	145-161	IULIA PAULA LAENATIANA	none mentioned	fla. pp.	dedic. of temple to Minerva <i>ob honorem flaminatus</i>	-	.... <i>sua pecunia fecit</i> , temple of Minerva	100 000 - 30 000 at Thugga, DJ, 90	
1	CIL 26 525	Thugga	145-161	IULIA PAULA LAENATIANA	none mentioned	fla. pp.	dedication for the health of the emperor; <i>ob honorem flaminatus</i>	-	<i>sportulae</i> & banquet on dedication		
1	CIL 25 529	Thugga	172/3	NANNEIA INSTANTIA FIDA	none mentioned	fla. pp.	dedication to Marcus Aurelius and Lucius Verus; <i>ob honorem flaminatus</i>	none to her	promises 2 colossal statues	30 000	
1	AE 1914, 176	Thugga	172/3	NANNEIA INSTANTIA FIDA	none mentioned; her heir C. Terentius Iulianus	fla. pp.	dedication to Marcus Aurelius and Lucius Verus; <i>ob honorem flaminatus</i>	carried out & dedicated by her heir	2 colossal statues delivered by her heir	30 000	
1	CIL 26 482	Thugga	184-192	NAHANIA VICTORIA	wife of Q. Pacuvius Satorus, fl. pp. augur of Carthage	fla. pp.	dedic of Mercury temple, <i>ob hon. fla.</i> of husband and wife	none mentioned	donation together with husband for temple according to test. of son; sum augmented in honour of flaminates	50 000 <i>ex codicillis fili</i> + 70 000 <i>ob hon. fl.</i>	<i>pollicitatio</i> by husband of a further 25 000, interest for <i>sportulae</i>
1	CIL 26 530 + 26 533	Thugga	184-192	NAHANIA VICTORIA	wife of Q. Pacuvius Satorus, fl. pp.	fla. pp.	to health of the emperor; dedication of <i>porticum et templum macelli</i>	none mentioned	husband & wife <i>extruxerunt et dedicaverunt</i>	30 000 market at Cuicul same period [AE 1916, 36]	
1	CIL 26 484	Thugga	184-192	NAHANIA VICTORIA	wife of Q. Pacuvius Satorus, fl. pp.	fla. pp.	dedication of <i>macellum</i>	none mentioned	husband and wife dedicate <i>macellum, sua pecunia fecerunt</i>		
1	CIL 26 483	Thugga	184-192	NAHANIA VICTORIA	wife of Q. Pacuvius Satorus	fla. pp.	dedic of <i>macellum</i>	none mentioned	husband and wife dedic. <i>macellum</i>		
1	ILA 527	Thugga	213-214	GABINIA HERMIONA	none mentioned	priv. cit.	dedic. of temple to the <i>genius</i> of the emperor	none mentioned	temple, <i>sua pecunia, testamento suo</i> ; interest of capital <i>suo testam.</i> for annual banquet on day of dedic, to be organized by her dependants; also land for a circus for the people	100 000 - 30 000 at Thugga, DJ, 90	the Gabinii a family of well-known benefactors: CIL 26598; ILA 535
1	CIL 26 558; ILA 530	Thugga	261	BOTRIA FORTUNATA	daughter of Victor	fla. pp.	dedication for the health of Gallienus and Salonina; dedic. of Tellus temple	none mentioned	<i>summa honoraria</i> temple built <i>a solo</i> , decor. & dedic. <i>sua pec.</i> ; <i>sportulae</i> to decur.s. & <i>epulis universo populo</i>	the sum = the <i>summa honoraria</i> for Thugga ?	
1	ILA 553	Thugga	261	BOTRIA FORTUNATA	none mentioned	fla. pp.	dedic. of Tellus temple	none mentioned	temple built	as above	
1	CIL 26278=15457	Uchi Maius	2/ 3 <sup>rd</sup>	L.AEB?IUTIA HONORATA AGRANA	wife of [...], daughter of Mumificius	priv. cit	dedic. of building (perhaps renov. off?)	-	she gives 4 meals over two days on dedication of building	?	
1	CIL 1181	Utica	3 <sup>rd</sup>	ACCIA ASCLEPIANILLA	daughter's of L. Accius Iulianus Asclepianus	c.f.	honorary dedication	town honours the family	their benefactions not specified	?	







NUMIDIA											
		CIL 2295 & 17736	Aïn Beida	1 <sup>st</sup> -2 <sup>nd</sup>	ANILA DOMITIA GEMINA INIATIALIS	wife of Primus, a priest of Hercules	priv. cit.	dedication of a temple	none mentioned	templum constituit de suo	
1 2 9											
1 3 0		CIL 23832	Aviocala	238	OSCIA MODESTA	none mentioned	c.f.	honorary	town honours <i>patrona ob insign. eius quibus illustrat originis suae patriam</i>	benefactions unspecified	?
1 3 1		CIL 7043	Cirta	3 <sup>rd</sup>	FABIA VICTORIA	wife of L. Luccaeus Hadrianus	equestrian status	honorary	town honours F. V. and her husband as <i>patrones</i>	benefactions unspecified	?
1 3 2		CIL 7080 ILAlg II, 695	Cirta	end 2 <sup>nd</sup>	VERATIA FRONTONILLA	wife of a retired centurion, P. Iulius Theodorus	<i>fla. IIIII coloniarum Cirtensium</i>	honorary	honorary statue to her by decurial decree, but cost paid by husband. <i>uxor probatissima</i>	-	
1 3 3		CIL 19492 = 6987 ILAlg II, 550	Cirta	42-3	COELIA VICTORIA POTITA	daughter of Sextus	<i>fla. divae Augustae</i>	dedication to deified Livia	none mentioned	a monument (?) <i>sua pec. faciendum curavit</i>	?  dedic. by the proconsul Q. Marcius Barea (AD 41-43); built by Coelia. Possibly C's priesthood was established during his term of office (Livia was deified in January AD 42)
1 3 4		CIL 7119 ILAlg II, 693	Cirta	3 <sup>rd</sup>	SITTIA CALPURNIA EXTRICATA	daughter of Gaius	<i>fla. pp. ex consensu populi</i>	honorary	honorary statue at public expense, but paid for by herself	<i>ob munificentiam eius</i> . She also pays for the statue which was to be erected in her own honour	6000 also at Cirta, AD 180/92 [ILAlg II, 479]
1 3 5		CIL 7120 ILAlg II, 694	Cirta	3 <sup>rd</sup>	SITTIA CALPURNIA EXTRICATA	daughter of G. Sittius Quadratus	<i>fla. pp.</i>	honorary, private	dedication by the slaves of her family, <i>familia posuit</i>	-	
1 3 6		CIL 19513	Cirta	2- 3 <sup>rd</sup>	IULIA VERANIA (sic)	daughter of Lucius	priv. cit.	dedication of statues, poss. for family members	-	statues, <i>remissa collatione</i> , on dedic. 8 asses per cit., 3 denarii per decur. & Iudi	?
1 3 7		ILAlg II, 1717	Cirta	1- 3 <sup>rd</sup>	LUCULLA	[...] <i>filia; soro[r]...</i>	[...]	building completed	[.....]	Luculla's role is unclear	47 000
1 3 8		AE 1914, 45 <i>passim</i>	Cuicul	225	GARGILLA MARCIANA	daughter of Gaius	priv. cit.	honorary statue to wife, mother and sister	<i>rarissima marita</i> , husband, son and brother dedicate statue to her	none mentioned	
1 3 9		AE 1946, 106	Cuicul	end 2 <sup>nd</sup>	CAECILIA MAXIMINA & CAECILIA VE[...]	[...] <i>filia</i>	?	dedication to Frugifer	none mentioned	sisters (?) <i>sua pec.</i> temple <i>pronaos</i> and columns for temple to Frugifer	?
1 4 0		AE 1920, 115	Cuicul	end 3 <sup>rd</sup>	DIDIA CORNELIA INGENUA	daughter of C. Iulius Crescens Didius Crescentianus, <i>fl.pp.</i> of the four colonies	<i>fla.pp. c.f.</i>	epitaph for father, <i>patri carissimo</i> , a member of notable equestrian family of the town	-	-	generally the family is well known for <i>liberalitas</i> . See Bassignano (1974: 261 nr. 4)
1 4 1		BCTH 1915: 134 nr. 27	Cuicul	3 <sup>rd</sup>	CLAUDIA	daughter of Tiberius	<i>fla.</i> [ .....]	[...] (probably a dedication <i>ob honorem fla.</i> )	-	<i>sua pecunia posuit</i> (?)	



1 4 2	AE 1931, 63	Diana Veteranorum	?	HORTENSIA FORTUNATA	no family mentioned	priestess of Magna Mater	for the health of the emperor [...]	-	undertakes the <i>laurobolium</i> and the <i>criobolium</i> on order of the high priest of the cult		
1 4 3	AE 1933, 70	Diana Veteranorum	3 <sup>rd</sup>	ULPIA ARISTONICA	wife of M. Valerius Maximianus	c.f.	honorary	town honours <i>patrona</i>	her benefactions not specified		
1 4 4	CIL 2630 & 18100	Lambaesis	156-159	VOLTEIA CORNIFICIA & MATUCCIA FUSCINA	wife & daughter of L. Matuccius Fuscinus	priv. citizens	additions to Isis and Serapis temple	-	L.M.F. with wife and daughter <i>sua pec.</i> add columns & decor to temple	?	
1 4 5	CIL 2670	Lambaesis	212-217	LUCIA QUIETA	? to L. Veturius Felix, <i>sacerdos</i>	?	temple, altar, portico of Saturn and Ops built	-	L.V.F. & Lucia Quieta build <i>templum et aram et porticum</i>	?	
1 4 6	AE 1911, 99	Lambaesis	198-201	GARGILA NUCERINA	wife of M. Seditius Rufus	?	dedication of statue	-	<i>nomine pollicitus</i>	?	
1 4 7	CIL 2647	Lambaesis	2/ 3 <sup>rd</sup>	ULPIA INGENUA	wife of M. Ulpianus Quintianus	priv. cit	dedic. of temple to Minerva and statue	-	restoration & dedic. of temple and statue by husband and wife	?	
1 4 8	CIL 18596	Lamsortis	161-252	VETTIA SATURNINA	wife of L. Hostilius Felix; mother of 2 Roman equestrians (Host. Saturninus and Host. Felix)	<i>fla.</i>	<i>ob honorem flaminii</i>	-	statue dedicated by Vettia	?	
1 4 9	CIL 7986	Rusicade	end 1 <sup>st</sup>	PROXINA PROCULA & GALLA, CORUNCANIA & GALLA NIGELLIANA	wife and daughters of C. Caecilius Gallus, <i>fl. prov.</i> ; 2 brothers also mentioned	priv. citizens	dedic. of tribunal & rostra?	-	Caecilius Gallus donates tribunal and rostra in his own name & those of his wife & 4 children, <i>sua pec.</i>	?	
1 5 0	CIL 7994	Rusicade	2/ 3 <sup>rd</sup>	LIBERIA	sister of Liberalis Junior	?	decoration of theatre	-	children <i>fecerunt et dedicaverunt</i> from inheritance		
1 5 1	CIL 7995	Rusicade	2/ 3 <sup>rd</sup>	LIBERIA	sister of Liberalis Junior	?	decoration of theatre	-	children <i>fecerunt et dedicaverunt</i> from inheritance		
1 5 2	CIL 7996	Rusicade	2/ 3 <sup>rd</sup>	LIBERIA	sister of Liberalis Junior	?	decoration of theatre	-	children <i>fecerunt et dedicaverunt</i> from inheritance		
1 5 3	CIL 8280 = ILS 6869	Territorium Gentis Abd en-Nur	2 <sup>nd</sup>	ANTONIA SATURNINA	daughter of Lucius	private citizen	<i>vicum et mundinas constituit</i>	none mentioned	establishes a village and market on her own land	?	
1 5 4	CIL 7032 = ILS 1, 616	(Cirra)	2 <sup>nd</sup>	ANTONIA SATURNINA	daughter of Lucius; wife of C. Arrius Pacatus and aunt of the Arrii, senatorial class	priv. cit., senatorial	honorary dedication	honorary statue? erected by freedman	<i>patronae merenti</i>	-	
1 5 6	CIL 17218	Thagaste	2/ 3 <sup>rd</sup>	CLODIA FABIANA	none mentioned	priv. cit.	honorary	statue erected for her by the <i>ordo pagi MON</i> [...] from the interest on her donation	capital donation, interest after 20 yrs to be used for her statue	2 000; interest = 8 000	



1 5 7	CIL 5142 & 1634	Thamugadi	2/ 3 <sup>rd</sup>	IULIA VICTORIA	wife of M. Gargilius Syrus, <i>fl.pp.</i>	priv. cit.	dedication of templo Jupiter and Juno	none mentioned	husband & wife <i>liberalitate et pec. sua posuerunt</i>	?	
1 5 8	CIL 2403; AE 1941, 45	Thamugadi	139-161	FLAVIA PROCILLA	daughter of Titus, wife of M. Caelius Saturinus, <i>fl.pp.</i> sister of Titus Flavius Monimus, equestrian	<i>fla. pp.</i>	dedic of 2 statues to Antoninus Pius and Marcus Aurelius honorary	erection of statues, a <i>ravissima famina, decreto decurionum</i> , erected by her brother	none mentioned	—	
1 5 9	CIL 17831 = 5400	Thamugadi	mid 2 <sup>nd</sup>	ANNIA CARA & ANNIA TRANQUILLA	daughters of M. Annius Hilarus and heirs of Annius Protus, freedmen of a centurion	A. Cara = <i>fla.</i>	dedication to the Fortuna Augusta	none	carried out testamentary request of Annius Protus (statue); constructed <i>sua pec.</i> a temple and gave banquet for decurions on dedic.	22 000 by testament for statue. 4 400 for temple	
1 6 0	CIL 2399	Thamugadi	early 3 <sup>rd</sup>	VALENTINA	wife of M. Plotius Faustus, <i>fl. pp.</i>	not mentioned	<i>macellum</i> decoration added	—	decoration added by Valentina; original market <i>cum Valentina fecit</i>	30 000 for market a t Cucul. 2 <sup>nd</sup> AD [AE 1916, 36]	= Sertia Cornelia Valentiana Tucciana below
1 6 1	CIL 2398	Thamugadi	early 3 <sup>rd</sup>	CORNELIA VALENTINA TUCCIANA	wife of Faustus	<i>fla.pp. bona memoria femina</i>	<i>macellum</i> decoration for the honour of husband's flaminate	statue erected to her; posthumous	market together with husband and decorations added by her		her husband is also honoured: CIL 2394/2395/2399
1 6 2	CIL 2396	Thamugadi	early 3 <sup>rd</sup>	[SERTIA CORNELIA VALENTINA TUCCIANA;	wife of M. Plotius Faustus, <i>fl. pp.</i>	<i>fla. pp., honesta memoria fem.</i>	honorary; <i>liberti</i> for <i>patrona</i>	Plotia Faustiana and Plotius Thallus honouring <i>patrona benignissima</i> with honorary base	none mentioned	—	
1 6 3	CIL 2397 ILS 2752	Thamugadi	early 3 <sup>rd</sup>	SERTIA CORNELIA VALENTINA TUCCIANA	wife of M. Plotius Faustus	<i>fla. pp.</i>	epitaph	dedication for his <i>coniugi desiderantissimae</i>	none mentioned	—	
1 6 4	AE 1980, 956; 1992; 1833	Thamugadi	early 3 <sup>rd</sup>	CORNELIA VALENTINA TUCCIANA	wife of M. Plotius Faustus, <i>fl.pp.</i>	<i>fla.pp</i>	dedication of honorary statue decreto decurionum	honorary statue erected by decurial decree	munificence towards her <i>patria</i>		
1 6 5	CRAI 1947, 96	Thamugadi	214-5	MANLIA PUDENTILLA	mother of P. Flavius Pudens Pomponianus; wife of Flavianus, then of L. Valerius Maximus	<i>c.f. &amp; fla.</i>	epitaph	none mentioned	none mentioned	—	
1 6 6	AE 1909, 156	Thamugadi	3 <sup>rd</sup>	VIRRIA FLAVIA SEVERIANA PETRONIANA	daughter of M. Virrius Iugurtha, dec., <i>fl.</i> , curator	<i>fla.</i>	honorary	Pompeii Fuscus and Felix erect honorary statue (?)	—	—	
1 6 7	CIL 17908	Thamugadi	?	IULIA VIC[...]	?	<i>fla.</i>	[.....]	[.....]	[.....]	?	
1 6 8	CIL 18912 ILS 6856 ILAlg II, 4686	Thibilis	2 <sup>nd</sup> - 3 <sup>rd</sup>	CLODIA VITOSA TERTULLINA	cousin of P. Clodius Quadratus Scipio, equestrian and decurion	<i>fla. IIII coloniarium</i>	dedication of honorary statue	P.C.Q.S. honours C.V.T. <i>ob insignem in se amorem et munificentiam eius</i> location given by decurial decree	munificence	?	
1 6 9	Warmington 1954; 208	Thibilis	211-212	VIBIA AURELIA SABINA	sister Commodus	<i>c.f.</i>	honorary	town honours V.A. for her generosity	benefactions not specified	?	



170	ILAlg II, 2,4639	Thibius	2 <sup>nd</sup>	SITTIA IULLA	daughter of P.ubius	priv. cit.	dedication of temple to Juno	-	<i>templum Iunoni de v. p. fecit</i>	?	
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# MAURETANIA CAESARIENSIS

1 7 1	CIL 9065	Auzia	224-227	LONGANIA PRIMOSA & KANINIA RESPECTA	Decennius Claudius Iuvenalis Sardicus, husband of Longania ?	priv. citizens, equestrian	dedication in memory of the Claudii, family of the two women	-	husband dedicates together with wife <i>metae</i> and clock for circus; tribunal for judges	?	
1 7 2	CIL 9066	Auzia	224-7	LONGANIA PRIMOSA & IULIA LUCILLA & CANINIA (sic) RESPECTA	L.P. wife of Decennius Claudius Iuvenalis Sardicus	equestrian	in memory of family	-	<i>omnibus ornamentis</i> [...] <i>sportulae</i> for decurions on day of dedication	?	
1 7 3	CIL 20756 = 9067	Auzia	224-7	LONGANIA PRIMOSA	wife of Decennius Claudius Iuvenalis Sardicus	not mentioned	in mem. of son and grandchildren	-	husband erects rostra with columns; L.P. with husband erects markets along the roadside [...]	informal markets less expensive	
1 7 4	CIL 9074	Auzia	267	LURIA IULIA & INSTANTIA	sister of Lurius Aristo ?	<i>fla. pp.</i>	she erects epitaph for her brother; Instantia for her parents	-	none	-	
1 7 5	CIL 9014	Auzia	224-7	MAESIA INSTITUTA [...] IUCUNDA; HONORATA [...] PRIMOSA	daughters of Decennius Claudius Iuvenalis Sardicus	priv. citizens	dedication to the <i>genius</i> of the colony	?	possibly a statue base?		
1 7 6	CIL 9052	Auzia		CLODIA LUCIOSA; CASSIA DULCA; CASSIA RESTUTA	wife and nieces of L. Cassius Restutus; <i>fl.</i>	priv. citizens	testamentary dedication	wife's birthday commem. by races	husband & wife donate capital, interest for 2x annual races, <i>sportulae</i> and refurbishment of statues	40 000 capital	
1 7 7	CIL 20747	Auzia	235	CLODIA LUCIOSA	wife of L. Cassius Restutus, <i>fl.</i>	priv. cit.	dedication of temple	-	husband & wife build and dedicate Bona Valerudo temple & decor.	?	
1 7 8	CIL 20757	Auzia	2 <sup>nd</sup> / 3 <sup>rd</sup>	CLAUDIA & RUFINA	wife of [...]; mother of [...]; ?	priv. citizens	dedication of ?	-	husband & wife (& children?) dedicate [...] with 4 steps; gymnasium oil by Rufina	?	
1 7 9	CIL 9403	Caesarea	?	IULIA MAXIMILLA	daughter of Gaius	<i>fla. ....</i>	[.....]	[.....]	[.....]		
1 8 0	CIL 21067	Caesarea	?	[...]	[...]	<i>fla. ....</i>	dedication	-	<i>cum ornamentis omnibus...</i>	?	
1 8 1	AE 1902, 12	Caesarea	?	SCANTIA PEREGRINA	daughter of Gaius	<i>sacerdos Deae Bellonae</i>	possibly in honour of her appointment as priestess	none mentioned	S.P. erects a temple at own cost; the location was granted by a decree of the decurions	?	the Bellona cult was an official cult in a number of cities, but better known for priests than priestesses. <i>ILALg</i> I 2071 at Madauros gives a list of the priests of the cult headed by a <i>flamen</i> of the colony.
1 8 2	CIL 9337	Caesarea	183	IULIA NATALIS	none mentioned	<i>canistraria</i> for Ceres	dedication	-	possibly <i>arca</i> for the city	77 000 - 50 000 DJ, 91	



1 8 3	CIL 8937 &20681	Saldæ	197	SELLIA SATURA	daughter of Quintus; mother of M. Aufidius Honoratus	priv. cit.	son ( <i>equus publ.</i> ) honoured by parents	none	statue for son erected by parents; <i>sportulæ</i> on day of dedic.		
1 8 4	CIL 8938	Saldæ	late 2 <sup>nd</sup> - early 3 <sup>rd</sup>	AURELIA LAIS	<i>liberta</i> of mother of Marcus Aurelius	<i>liberta</i>	dedication of statue	mother honoured, <i>matri piissimæ</i> by her son; statue for mother; <i>sportulæ</i> & races on day of dedic.	none mentioned	?	

## MAURETANIA TINGITANA

1 8 5	ILA 646	Annoceur	early 2 <sup>nd</sup>	FLAVIA GERMANILLA	daughter of Titus	<i>fla. provinciae</i>	epitaph	none	none	—	
1 8 6	AE 1942/3, 116	Valentia Banasa	?	CAECILIA MACRINA	daughter of Lucius; mother of Ulpia Modesta	<i>fla.</i>	honorary epitaph	honorary base for <i>matri piissimæ</i>	none mentioned	—	
1 8 7	CIL 21842; ILM 135; AE 1891, 117	Volubilis	late 1 <sup>st</sup>	OCRATINA	daughter of Ocratus; wife of M. Valerius Sassius Pudens	<i>fla. provincia Tingitana</i>	honorary statue dedicated by husband	honorary statue to her <i>uxori indulgentissimæ</i>	none mentioned	—	
1 8 8	ILA 630; ILM 129; AE 1916, 43	Volubilis	1 <sup>st</sup>	FABIA BIRA	daughter of Izelta; wife of Marcus Valerius Severus of the tribe Galeria, suffete/ magistrate	<i>flaminica prima in municipio Volubilis</i>	honorary dedication	statue in the forum; base paid for and dedicated by her husband	for her great generosity towards her town; <i>erga suos piissimæ et bene meritæ</i>	?	
1 8 9	ILA 631; ILM 130; AE 1916, 447	Volubilis	1 <sup>st</sup>	FABIA BIRA	daughter of Izelta; wife of M. Valerius Severus, son of Bostar; suffete	<i>flaminica prima in municipio Volubilis</i>	honorary	her nephews the Fabii erect the base in honour of their aunt <i>amitæ indulgentissimæ</i>	none mentioned	—	
1 9 0	ILA 632; ILM 313	Volubilis	1 <sup>st</sup>	FABIA BIRA	daughter of Izelta	<i>flaminica prima in municipio Volubilis</i>	dedication of statue	—	she erects statue at her own cost and makes dedication	?	
1 9 1	CIL 21821, ILM 49	Volubilis	1 <sup>st</sup>	FABIA BIRA	daughter of Izelta	<i>fla. ....</i>	dedication to Ceres Augustæ	[...]	[...]	?	
1 9 2	AE 1916, 91; ILA 625, ILM 123	Volubilis	2 <sup>nd</sup>	AEMILIA SEXTINA	daughter of Decimus; wife of Nammius Maternus, prefect of cohort equestrian	<i>fla. for the second time</i>	honorary	the <i>ordo</i> of the town decrees land for her mausoleum, pays for the funeral and erects statue for her remarkable moral qualities and her husband's benefactions; base of the statue paid for by her husband	none mentioned	—	A.S. was originally from Vienna
1 9 3	CIL 21847; ILM 55	Volubilis	3 <sup>rd</sup>	LUJCILLA	[...]	<i>fla. ....</i>	dedication to Isis	[...]	[...]	—	?





## APPENDIX B

# MAIN EVENTS AND TRENDS AFFECTING ROMAN AFRICA

## BC

583-570	BATTUS II KING OF CYRENAICA
480	CARTHAGE DEFEATS LOCAL LIBYANS, NUMIDIANS AND MAURI AND BEGINS TERRITORIAL DOMINATION HERODOTUS ACTIVE
264-241	FIRST PUNIC WAR. MANY AFRICAN MERCENARIES IN THE CARTHAGINIAN ARMY [POLYBIUS 1.67.7], BUT THESE MUTINY - AFRICAN WAR OF CARTHAGE [POLYBIUS 1.69.6 - 70.5]
202	BATTLE OF ZAMA - SCIPIO AFRICANUS DEFEATS HANNIBAL
146	CARTHAGE FALLS TO THE ROMANS - SCIPIO AEMILIANUS; AFRICA PROCONSULARIS FOUNDED; REST OF AFRICA DIVIDED AMONG THE NATIVE KINGS
112-107	JUGURTHA; MARIUS SETTLES HIS VETERANS IN AFRICA, INCLUDING THE LIBYANS WHO HAD ASSISTED HIM AND WERE REWARDED WITH ROMAN CITIZENSHIP; KINGDOM OF NUMIDIA PASSES TO BROTHER OF JUGURTHA, GAUDA EVENTUALLY TO HIS GRANDSON JUBA
111	PTOLEMY APION BEQUEATHS CYRENAICA TO ROME
78	FIRST RECORD OF EXPORT OF NUMIDIAN MARBLE TO ROME
67	CYRENAICA REDUCED TO A ROMAN PROVINCE; ALL EAST LIBYAN LITORAL UNDER ROMAN CONTROL
47/6	CAESAR TRIUMPHS AGAINST POMPEY AND CATO THE YOUNGER; JUBA, ALLY OF POMPEY, COMMITS SUICIDE AND HIS TERRITORIES BECOME <b>AFRICA NOVA</b> , MOST OF THE OLD NUMIDIAN KINGDOM
45	SALLUST GOVERNOR OF NUMIDIA
c.40	OCTAVIAN UNITES AFRICA VETUS AND AFRICA NOVA INTO <b>AFRICA PROCONSULARIS</b> ; THE CAPITAL NOW AT CARTHAGE INSTEAD OF UTICA DIODORUS SICULUS ACTIVE
33	BOCCHUS II, KING OF MAURETANIA, WILLS HIS KINGDOM TO OCTAVIAN
25	MAURETANIA IS GIVEN TO JUBA II AS CLIENT KING BY ORDER OF AUGUSTUS - JUBA II MARRIES CLEOPATRA SELENE, DAUGHTER OF CLEOPATRA AND MARCUS ANTONIUS
19	REBUILDING OF CARTHAGE - AUGUSTUS SENDS 3 000 COLONISTS; EXPEDITION AGAINST THE MARAUDING GARAMANTES BY C. BALBUS - HE CONQUERS GARAMA (GERMA) CAPITAL OF THE GARAMANTES
6	MUSULINI AND GAETULI DEFEATED IN WESTERN LIBYA BY CORNELIUS CRASSUS [CASSIUS DIO 55.26]
??	AMMAEDARA, FIRST CAMP OF THE THIRD AUGUSTAN LEGION

## AD

### -14 AUGUSTUS

c.14-24	<b>TACFARINAS</b> LEADS THE LIBYAN REBELLION WHEN ROMAN MERCHANT AND ARMY EXPANSION SOUTHWARDS INTERRUPTS BERBER MIGRATION ROUTES. THE MILITARY CAMP WAS ESTABLISHED ON TRIBAL LAND OF THE MUSULAMIANS
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### 14-37 TIBERIUS

15	MANILIUS (ASTRONOMICAL POET); VALERIUS MAXIMUS AND VELLEIUS PATERCULUS (HISTORIAN) ACTIVE
20	P. SULPICIUS QUIRINIUS, PROCONSUL OF CRETA AND CYRENE DEFEATS THE MARMARIDAE AND THE GARAMANTES [L. ANNAEUS FLORUS 4.12.41]
30	PHILO (JEWISH WRITER) ACTIVE DEATH OF THE ELDER SENECA (WRITER ON ORATORY)

### 37-41 GAIUS CALIGULA

37	RISING OF THE MAURI
40	DEATH OF PTOLEMY (SON OF JUBA II), KING OF MAURETANIA; MAURETANIA BECOMES A ROMAN PROVINCE SUETONIUS PAULINUS PUTS DOWN AEDEMON REVOLT IN WESTERN ATLAS

### 41-54 CLAUDIUS

	DIVIDES MAURETANIA INTO TWO PROVINCES
42	SUETONIUS PAULINUS CROSSES THE ATLAS MOUNTAINS AND PENETRATES WESTERN SAHARA
43	INVASION OF BRITAIN
46	GALBA PROCONSUL OF AFRICA
49	SENECA (PHILOSOPHER AND TRAGEDIAN) MADE TUTOR TO FUTURE EMPEROR NERO
49	VITELLIUS PROCONSUL OF AFRICA



## *Main Events and Trends Affecting Roman Africa*

### **54-68 NERO**

- 54 LUCAN (EPIC POET) AND PERSIUS (SATIRIST) ACTIVE
- 58-62 CONQUEST AND LOSS OF ARMENIA
- 61 REVOLT OF ICENI UNDER BOUDICCA IN BRITAIN
- 62 DEATH OF BURRUS; SENECA RETIRES
- 64-68 BUILDING OF NERO'S GOLDEN HOUSE
- 65 PISONIAN CONSPIRACY AGAINST NERO - SUICIDES OF SENECA AND LUCAN
- 66 SUICIDE OF PETRONIUS
- 66-73 JEWISH REVOLT
- 67 JOSEPHUS, REBEL LEADER IN JUDAEA AND FUTURE AUTHOR, DESERTS TO THE ROMANS
- 68 SUICIDE OF NERO
- 68-69 YEAR OF THE FOUR EMPERORS: FOUR GENERALS, GALBA, OTHO, VITELLIUS AND VESPASIAN STRUGGLE FOR POWER

### **69-79 VESPASIAN**

- 69 REVOLT OF OEA AND LEPCIS MAGNA AIDED BY THE GARAMANTES
- 70 DESTRUCTION OF THE TEMPLE AT JERUSALEM
- 72 THIRD AUGUSTA SETTLED AT THEVESTE  
UNDER THE FLAVIANS AMMAEDARA BECOMES A *COLONIA*, FILLED WITH MILITARY CAMPAIGN VETERANS
- 74 FRONTINUS (ADMINISTRATOR AND TECHNICAL WRITER) CONSUL
- 75 THIRD AUGUSTAN LEGION MOVES TO THEVESTE

### **79-81 TITUS**

- 78-85 CAMPAIGNS OF AGRICOLA IN BRITAIN
- 79 ERUPTION OF VESUVIUS AND DESTRUCTION OF POMPEII AND HERCULANEUM  
DEATH OF THE ELDER PLINY (NATURALIST AND ENCYCLOPAEDIST) INVESTIGATING CORRUPTION
- 80 FIRE AT ROME; DESTRUCTION OF CAPITOLINE TEMPLE
- 80 INAUGURATION OF THE COLOSSEUM

### **81-96 DOMITIAN**

- DOMITIAN'S PALACE ON THE PALATINE BUILT
- STATIUS, SILIUS ITALICUS, MARTIAL AND QUINTILIAN ACTIVE
- 86 REVOLT OF THE NASAMONES, WHO TAKE THE CAMP OF PRAETOR FLACCUS. DRUNK ON THE WINE STORE IN THE CAMP.  
FLACCUS EASILY MANAGES TO RETAKE THE CAMP - NASAMONES PUT TO THE SWORD
- 86-92 DOMITIAN'S WARS AGAINST THE DACIANS (MODERN RUMANIA)

### **96-98 NERVA**

- 97 NERVA ESTABLISHES A COLONY OF VETERANS AT SITIFIS  
TACITUS [55 - 117] CONSUL  
DIO CHRYSOSTOM (GREEK ORATOR), EPICTETUS (MORALIST) AND PLUTARCH ACTIVE, WRITING IN GREEK

### **98-117 TRAJAN**

- 100 FOUNDATION OF THE CITY OF THAMUGADI UNDER TRAJAN AND GREAT SPREAD OF COLONISATION IN NORTH AFRICA  
EXPEDITIONS AGAINST THE AETHIOPIANS
- 100-111 PL'NY THE YOUNGER (ORATOR AND LETTER WRITER) CONSUL AND GOVERNOR OF BITHYNIA
- 101-106 TRAJAN CONQUERS DACIA
- 112-113 FORUM OF TRAJAN AND TRAJAN'S COLUMN DEDICATED
- 115 JUDAIC UPRISING IN CYRENAICA - MASSACRE OF THE GENTILES [EUSEBIUS 4.2.2]
- 114-117 TRAJAN'S PARTHIAN WAR: ARMENIA AND MESOPOTAMIA ANNEXED
- 115-117 JEWISH REVOLT
- 115-130 APPIAN, LUCAN AND PTOLEMY ACTIVE, WRITING IN GREEK

### **117-138 HADRIAN**

- 117 INSURRECTION OF MAURI UNDER Q LUSIUS QUIETUS SUPPRESSED  
SUETONIUS AND JUVENAL ACTIVE  
PANTHEON BUILT IN ROME



## *Main Events and Trends Affecting Roman Africa*

	HADRIAN'S VILLA BUILT AT TIVOLI; HADRIAN'S WALL BUILT AS A FRONTIER BETWEEN SCOTLAND AND ENGLAND
	PAUSANIAS WRITES HIS DESCRIPTIONS OF GREECE
122	HADRIAN VISITS THE PROVINCES OF AFRICA
	AQUEDUCT OF CARTHAGE BEGINS AROUND THIS TIME
125	SECOND AFRICAN VISIT; BIRTH OF APULEIUS
125	PERMANENT ESTABLISHMENT OF THE LEGION AT LAMBAESIS
131	HADRIAN ESTABLISHES THE PANHELLENION, BASED ON ATHENS, AS LEAGUE OF THE GREEK ALLIES
132-135	BAR KOCHBA'S REVOLT LEADS TO FINAL DISPERSION OF THE JEWS

### **138-161 ANTONINUS PIUS**

138	MAURI INVADE NUMIDIA BUT ARE SUPPRESSED AND SUE FOR PEACE
143	HERODES ATTICUS (GREEK ORATOR) AND <b>FRONTO</b> CONSULS
144	SPEECH OF AELIUS ARISTIDES (GREEK ORATOR) IN PRAISE OF ROME; AULUS GELLIUS ACTIVE
146	SEPTIMIUS SEVERUS BORN AT LEPCIS MAGNA
148	900TH ANNIVERSARY OF FOUNDING OF ROME
155	BIRTH OF TERTULLIAN
157-158	MARRIAGE OF APULEIUS AND PUDENTILLA
158-159	APULEIUS DEFENDS HIMSELF IN COURT BEFORE PROCONSUL CLAUDIUS MAXIMUS
160	BIRTH OF JULIUS SEXTUS AFRICANUS IN PALESTINE

### **161-180 MARCUS AURELIUS**

162-166	PARTHIAN WARS OF LUCIUS VERUS
165-167	PLAGUE SPREADS THROUGH THE ROMAN EMPIRE
	<b>APULEIUS</b> (LATIN WRITER) AND <b>GALEN</b> (DOCTOR) ACTIVE
168-175	GERMAN WARS OF MARCUS AURELIUS
	BIRTH OF TERTULLIAN
	MORE MAURI REVOLTS - MAURI TAKE ON THE ROMANS BOTH IN AFRICA AND IN SPAIN BUT ARE DEFEATED [MARCUS AURELIUS 21]
174-180	<i>MEDITATIONS</i> OF MARCUS AURELIUS COMPLETED

### **180-192 COMMODUS**

180	FIRST CHRISTIAN MARTYRS EXECUTED IN AFRICA - EARLIEST CHRISTIAN EVIDENCE FOR ROMAN AFRICA
189	VICTOR I BECOMES FIRST AFRICAN BISHOP AT ROME
192	PERTINAX DECLARED EMPEROR

### **192 PERTINAX**

193	COMMODUS MURDERED AND FOUR ASPIRING EMPERORS CONTEND FOR POWER
193	COLUMN OF MARCUS AURELIUS COMPLETED
	TERTULLIAN CONVERTED TO CHRISTIANITY
	PHILOSTRATUS (LITERARY BIOGRAPHER), HERODIAN (HISTORIAN), MARIUS MAXIMUS (BIOGRAPHER), SEXTUS EMPIRICUS (SCPTIC PHILOSOPHER), ALEXANDER OF APHRODISIAS (COMMENTATOR ON ARISTOTLE).
	CLEMENT OF ALEXANDRIA ACTIVE
	AGRIPPINUS BISHOP OF CARTHAGE

### **193-211 SEPTIMIUS SEVERUS**

	NUMIDIA BECOMES A PROVINCE
	SEVERUS BESTOWS UPON THE ROMAN PEOPLE A DAILY ALLOWANCE OF OIL WHICH WAS GIVEN FREE UNTIL THE TIME OF CONSTANTINE
	MARRIAGE WITH JULIA DOMNA
	CAMPAIGNS AGAINST THE GARAMANTES
197-206	<b>TERTULLIAN</b> - CATHOLIC PERIOD OF HIS WRITING
	<b>CYPRIAN</b> , BISHOP OF CARTHAGE IN THE MIDDLE OF THE 3 <sup>RD</sup> CENTURY
197	PUBLICATION OF TERTULLIAN'S <i>APOLOGETICUM</i>
197	SEVERUS GRANTS PERMISSION TO SOLDIERS TO WEAR THE GOLD RING, [PLINY <i>NH</i> 33.4.10 33.8; HERODIAN, <i>HISTORY</i> 3.8.4]
198	SEPTIMIUS ESTABLISHES GARRISON AT CASTELLUM DIMMIDI
200	MARTYRDOM OF THE SCILLITANI
201	EDICT OF SEVERUS FORBIDDING CONVERSION TO JUDAISM OR CHRISTIANITY
202-203	SEVERUS VISITS HIS HOME TOWN OF LEPTIS MAGNA AND BUILDS THE ARCH OF SEPTIMIUS SEVERUS IN THE ROMAN FORUM



## Main Events and Trends Affecting Roman Africa

203	MARTYRDOM OF PERPETUA AND FELICITY IN CARTHAGE
205	CYPRIAN OF CARTHAGE BORN
206-212	SEMI MONTANIST PERIOD OF TERTULLIAN'S WRITING
200-254	ORIGEN (CHRISTIAN PHILOSOPHER) ACTIVE
208-211	SEVERUS CAMPAIGNS IN BRITAIN AND DIES AT YORK

### 211-217 CARACALLA

212	THE <i>CONSTITUTIO ANTONINIANA</i> GRANTS CITIZENSHIP TO ALL FREEBORN INHABITANTS OF THE EMPIRE
213	MONTANIST PERIOD OF TERTULLIAN'S WRITING
216	BATHS OF CARACALLA COMPLETED

MACRINUS, A MOOR FROM IOL CAESAREA, EMPEROR

### 217-218 MACRINUS

HELIOGABALUS OR ELAGABALUS, HALF AFRICAN

### 218-222 ELAGABALUS

SEVERUS ALEXANDER, HALF-AFRICAN

### 222-235 SEVERUS ALEXANDER

221	JULIUS AFRICANUS COMPLETES HIS CHRONOLOGY OF THE WORLD FROM CREATION TO 221
223	MURDER OF <b>ULPIAN</b> , PRAETORIAN PREFECT AND JURIST, BY HIS TROOPS
225	AGRIPPINUS ASSEMBLES COUNCIL AT CARTHAGE TO CONSIDER THE VALIDITY OF BAPTISM BY HERETICS
226	ARASHDIR THE SASSANIAN INAUGURATES 400 YEARS OF INTERMITTENT WAR WITH THE ROMAN EMPIRE
229	CASSIUS DIO CONSUL FOR THE SECOND TIME TOGETHER WITH THE EMPEROR
235	ASSASSINATION OF SEVERUS ALEXANDER

### **235-285 NEARLY 20 EMPERORS DURING 50 YEARS OF MILITARY ANARCHY**

### 235-238 MAXIMINUS

235	MAXIMINUS RAVAGES NORTH AFRICA
236	POPULAR RISING AGAINST THE TYRANNY OF MAXIMINUS AND PROCLAMATION OF GORDIAN AS CAESAR
238	ELEVATION OF GORDIANUS PIUS AT THYSDRUS [HERODIAN, <i>Ab Excessu Divi Marci</i> 7.4.2]; NUMIDIAN LEGION SUPPRESSES REVOLT OF UPPER CLASSES OF AFRICA PROCONSULARIS

### 238 GORDIAN I, II

### 238 - 244 GORDIAN III

238	THIRD AUGUSTAN LEGION TEMPORARILY DISBANDED BY GORDIAN III; GARRISON WITHDRAWN FROM DESERT OUTPOST OF CASTELLUM DIMMIDI
239	BUILDING OF THEATRE AT THYSDRUS STARTS AROUND THIS TIME TRANQUIL REIGN FOR AFRICA

### 243-249 PHILIP THE ARABIAN

247	1000 <sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY OF THE FOUNDATION OF ROME GIVES RISE TO THE CONSTRUCTION OF MANY PUBLIC WORKS IN AFRICA
248	CYPRIAN BECOMES BISHOP OF CARTHAGE

### 249-251 DECIUS

249-251	DECIUS' PERSECUTION OF THE CHRISTIANS
251	AEMILIANUS, A MOOR, PROCLAIMED EMPEROR ON THE ISLAND OF DJERBA
251	CYPRIAN CONVOKES COUNCIL AT CARTHAGE TO DISCUSS THE LAPSED AFTER DECIAN PERSECUTION
252	ANOTHER COUNCIL AT CARTHAGE TO DISCUSS THE LAPSED AND BAPTISM BY HERETICS

### **253-260 VALERIAN / 253-268 GALLIENUS**

253	INSURRECTIONS ON SOUTHERN FRONTIERS. THIRD AUGUSTA RESTORED ; POLITICAL AND MILITARY CRISIS IN AFRICA CITIZENS OF LEPCIS MAGNA TAKE THE NAME SALONINIANI IN HONOUR OF SALONINA AUGUSTA, THE WIFE OF GALLIENUS
256	PERSECUTIONS UNDER VALERIAN; SEVENTH COUNCIL OF AFRICAN BISHOPS AT CARTHAGE
258	MARTYRDOM OF CYPRIAN NEAR CARTHAGE
260	RISING OF THE QUINQUEGENTIANS OR <i>FEUD OF THE FIVE PEOPLES</i> : MASINISSENS, JUBALENI, ISAFLENS, TYNDENSES AND THE FRAXINENSES, FEROCIOUS MAURETANIAN TRIBES BETWEEN SALDAE AND CISSI. THEY INVADE NUMIDIA AND CAUSE GREAT DEVASTATION IN NORTH AFRICA



## *Main Events and Trends Affecting Roman Africa*

267 THE HERCULI INVADE GREECE  
EARTHQUAKE IN AFRICA

### **268-270 CLAUDIUS GOTHICUS**

270 DEATH OF PLOTINUS (NEOPLATONIST PHILOSOPHER)

### **270-275 AURELIAN**

271 AURELIAN WALLS OF ROME BUILT

271 PERIOD OF NOMADIC ROBBERS WHO RAID FROM THE LIBYAN DESERT [ZOSIMUS 1.70]

280 PROBUS DEFEATS THE MARMARIDES ON THE EASTERN BORDERS OF ROMAN AFRICA

### **284-305 DIOCLETIAN**

FOUNDERS THE TETRARCHY; EMPIRE ADMINISTERED AS WEST AND EAST; AFRICA GIVEN TO MAXIMIANUS - NOW DIVIDED IN 7 PROVINCES: MAURETANIA TINGITANA AND SPAIN; BYZACENA; NUMIDIA CIRTENSIS; NUMIDIA MILITIANA; MAURETANIA SITIFENSIS AND MAURETANIA CAESARIENSIS

CHRISTIANITY SPREADS TO NUMIDIAN RURAL AREAS

DIOCLETIAN ORDERS THAT ALL WOMEN, NOT JUST HEIRESSSES, BE COUNTED IN THE CENSUS

292 DIOCLETIAN CALLS ON THE NOBATAE OR NOBADAEE, A WESTERN DESERT TRIBE, TO OCCUPY NUBIA TO DEFEND THE SOUTH EGYPTIAN FRONTIER AGAINST THE BLEMMYES.

301 EDICT OF PRICES

303 QUINQUEGENTIANI FINALLY SUPPRESSED

APPROXIMATE DATE WHEN TRIPOLITANIA BECAME A ROMAN PROVINCE; LEPCIS MAGNA BECOMES PROVINCIAL CAPITAL

303-305 GREAT PERSECUTIONS OF CHRISTIANS

AFRICA PROCONSULARIS SUBDIVIDED; NORTH RETAINS THE NAME, SOUTH BECOMES BYZACENIA

305 **ABDICATION OF DIOCLETIAN**

DONATIST SCHISM COMMENCES

REVOLT BY GOVERNOR OF AFRICA SUPPRESSED

ARNOBIUS OF SICCA WRITES *AGAINST THE PAGANS*

307-312 BASILICA OF MAXENTIIUS IN ROME, COMPLETED BY CONSTANTINE

308 VICARIUS AFRICAE, LUCIUS DOMITIUS ALEXANDER, REVOLTS AGAINST MAXENTIIUS AND PROCLAIMS HIMSELF AUGUSTUS; SIDES WITH CONSTANTINE

310 MAXENTIIUS DEFEATS L. DOMITIUS ALEXANDER IN AFRICA; DESTRUCTION OF CIRTA, CARTHAGE, ETC

311 EDICT OF TOLERATION. CAECILIAN ELECTED BISHOP OF CARTHAGE

312 CONSTANTINE WINS THE BATTLE OF THE MILVIAN BRIDGE UNDER THE SIGN OF THE CHRISTIAN CROSS

### **312-337 CONSTANTINE**

PRIESTHOOD IN HONOUR OF FLAVIAN FAMILY ESTABLISHED IN AFRICA;

CIRTA REBUILT AND RENAMED CONSTANTINA (AURELIUS VICTOR 40.28)

313-322 FIRST CHRISTIAN BASILICA BUILT IN ROME

313 EDICT OF MILAN; ROMAN COUNCIL UPHOLDS CAECILIAN'S ELECTION

314 DONATISTS APPEAL TO CONSTANTINE; COUNCIL OF ARLES

316 CONSTANTINE GIVES UNQUALIFIED SUPPORT TO CAECILIAN

EUSEBIUS BISHOP OF CAESAREA

323 THAMUGADI AND OTHER LARGE CITIES SUFFER FROM THE DONATIST SCHISM

324-337 CONSTANTINE SOLE EMPEROR

325 COUNCIL OF NICEA IN BITHYNIA, DONATIST HERESY CONDEMNED

327 DEATH OF ARNOBIUS OF SICCA

330 FOUNDATION OF CONSTANTINOPLE

CONSTANTINE BUILDS NEW CHURCH AT CIRTA FOR CATHOLICS

337 DEATH OF CONSTANTINE

### **337-361 CONSTANTIIUS II**

345-348 COUNCIL OF CARTHAGE HELD UNDER GRATIUS TO CONSIDER DISCIPLINARY ACTION FOR CLERGY AND BISHOPS

346 MACARIUS AND PAULUS SENT TO PACIFY DONATISTS

348 BIRTH OF PRUDENTIUS

CONSTANS EXILES DONATIST BISHOPS

354 BIRTH OF AUGUSTINE AT THAGASTE, NOVEMBER 13



## Main Events and Trends Affecting Roman Africa

355 DEATH OF DONATUS IN EXILE

### 361-363 JULIAN THE APOSTATE

JULIAN RECEIVES THE SUBMISSION OF THE AFRICAN PROVINCES

MEDICAL WRITINGS OF ORIBASIOS AT JULIAN'S COURT

362 JULIAN SUPPORTS HERETICAL BISHOPS AGAINST ORTHODOX CHRISTIANITY; RECALLS DONATIST BISHOPS FROM EXILE

### 363-364 JOVIAN

### 364-375 VALENTINIAN I

### 364-378 VALENS

363-6 AREA OF LEPICIS MAGNA DESTROYED BY AUSTURIANI TRIBE

365 EARTHQUAKE AND TIDAL WAVE AFFECT THE COASTAL CITIES OF CYRENAICA AND TRIPOLITANIA

370 REBELLION OF THE MAURI UNDER FIRMUS

VALENTINIAN ISSUES LAW FORBIDDING PROVINCIALS TO MARRY BARBARIANS OR GENTILES [*COD. THEOD.* 3.14.1]

364-375 RESTORATION OF MANY PUBLIC BUILDINGS

371 AUGUSTINE GOES TO STUDY AT CARTHAGE AT AGE 17

372 REVOLT OF FIRMUS IN KABYLIE MOUNTAINS WITH DONATIST SUPPORT CONTINUES

BIRTH OF ADEODATUS, SON OF AUGUSTINE

374 AUGUSTINE JOINS MANICHEAN SECT

375 FIRMUS DEFEATED BY THE *COMES* THEODOSIUS (FATHER OF THEODOSIUS I THE GREAT) WHO CRUSHES REVOLT AND IS HIMSELF EXECUTED BY GRATIANUS IN 376

### 375-392 VALENTINIAN II

376 AUGUSTINE TEACHES RHETORIC AT CARTHAGE

370-420 JEROME ACTIVE

370-397 AMBROSE ACTIVE

### 378-395 THEODOSIUS THE GREAT (WIFE FLACCILLA)

380 DONATIST COUNCIL AT CARTHAGE CONDEMNS TYCONNIUS IN SAME YEAR THAT HE COMPLETES *LIBER REGULARUM*

381 CHRISTIANITY THE OFFICIAL RELIGION OF THE EMPIRE

382/3 AUGUSTINE GOES TO MILAN

DAUGHTER GALLA PLACIDIA IS REGENT FOR VALENTINIAN III

387 AUGUSTINE RETURNS TO AFRICA WITH MONICA, BUT SHE DIES AT OSTIA

388-391 SELLING HIS PATRIMONY, AUGUSTINE TAKES UP A MONASTIC LIFE WITH SOME OF HIS FRIENDS

390 REVOLT OF THE AUSTURIANI

AMMIANUS MARCELLINUS ACTIVE

391 AUGUSTINE ORDAINED AS PRESBYTER AT HIPPO REGIUS

393 COUNCIL OF HIPPO UNDER AURELIUS, BISHOP OF CARTHAGE

394 AUGUSTINE ORDAINED AS BISHOP-COADIUTOR

395 DIVISION OF THE EMPIRE BETWEEN THE SONS OF THEODOSIUS

395/6 AUGUSTINE IS MADE FULL BISHOP OF HIPPO ON DEATH OF VALERIUS

### 395-423 HONORIUS (WEST)

### 395-408 ARCADIUS (EAST)

397 UPRISING OF GILDO, BROTHER OF FIRMUS, MILITARY GOVERNOR (*COMES*) OF AFRICA

COUNCIL OF CARTHAGE DISCUSSES THE CANON OF THE SCRIPTURES AND DONATISM

398 STILICHO, SON OF A VANDAL CAPTAIN, DEFEATS GILDO; WAS ONE OF THEODOSIUS' GREATEST GENERALS AND UNDER HONORIUS WAS THE VIRTUAL RULER OF THE WEST. DEFEATS ALARIC AND RADAGAIUS; WAS THE PATRON OF THE POET CLAUDIAN WHO DEDICATED THE PANEGYRIC *DE CONSOLATU STILICHONIS* TO HIM

399 HONORIUS ORDERS CLOSING OF PAGAN TEMPLES AND DESTRUCTION OF IDOLS - *CODEx THEODOSIANUS* 16.10.16-18

c.400 SEVERUS BECOMES BISHOP OF MILEVIS; LIFE-LONG FRIEND OF AUGUSTINE

AUGUSTINE WRITES HIS *CONFESSIONS*

DURING THE 5<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY THE CHRISTIANS WERE THE MAJORITY OF THE POPULATION (KAEGI 1968: 59)

DEATH OF TYCONNIUS

401 COUNCIL OF CARTHAGE

402 COUNCIL OF MILEVIS CONDEMNS PELAGIUS AND APPEALS TO POPE INNOCENT I TO DISAVOW HIM

403 COUNCIL OF CARTHAGE

404 COUNCIL OF CARTHAGE

405 COUNCIL OF CARTHAGE. DONATISM OFFICIALLY DECLARED A HERESY BY HONORIUS - EDICT OF UNITY OR *EDICTUM QUOD*



## Main Events and Trends Affecting Roman Africa

*DE UNITATE* (COD. THEODOS. 16.11.2)

FRESH OUTBREAKS OF DONATIST FURY

406 THE GERMANS CROSS THE RHINE

407 COUNCIL OF CARTHAGE

408 STILICHO IS BETRAYED BY OLYMPIUS. STILICHO AND OPTATUS BISHOP OF THAMUGADI ARE EXECUTED; SALVINA, DAUGHTER OF GILDO, MARRIED TO A NEPHEW OF AELIA FLACCILLA, WIFE OF THEODOSIUS I; OLYMPIUS BECOMES MASTER OF THE OFFICES IN 408.

COUNCIL OF CARTHAGE IN JUNE AND OCTOBER. AUGUSTINE INTERCEDES WITH OLYMPIUS NOT TO IMPOSE THE DEATH PENALTY ON DONATIST OFFENDERS AGAINST THE EDICT OF UNITY

408/409 MELANIA, PINIAN AND ALBINA LEAVE ROME FOR AFRICA

### 408-450 THEODOSIUS II

409 COUNCIL OF CARTHAGE

410 SACK OF ROME BY ALARIC THE VISIGOTH

PELAGIUS FLEES FROM ROME TO CARTHAGE

411 AUGUSTINE CONVENES A COUNCIL AT CARTHAGE, 566 BISHOPS PRESENT; MARCELLINUS, TRIBUNE AND NOTARY AND BROTHER TO ASPRINGIUS (PROCONSUL OF AFRICA) APPOINTED BY HONORIUS TO PRESIDE OVER THE DISPUTE BETWEEN CATHOLICS AND DONATISTS. DONATISM REJECTED; IMPARTIALITY OF MARCELLINUS COMMEMORATED BY IMPERIAL DECREE [COD. THEOD. 16.5.55]. PELAGIUS AND HIS COLLABORATOR COELESTIUS EXCOMMUNICATED

413 REVOLT OF HERACLIAN. MARCELLINUS AND HIS BROTHER SEIZED, IMPRISONED AND PUT TO DEATH IN SPITE OF PLEAS FROM AFRICAN BISHOPS.

AUGUSTINE WRITES *CITY OF GOD*

419 COUNCIL OF CARTHAGE ASSEMBLES TO DISCUSS THE CLAIM OF ROME TO HAVE JURISDICTION OVER NORTH AFRICA

422 BONIFACIUS GOVERNOR OF AFRICA

### 425-455 VALENTINIAN III (WIFE LICINIA EUDOXIA) (WEST)

427 REVOLT OF COUNT BONIFACIUS

429 VANDALS UNDER GENSERIC/GAISERIC INVADE AFRICA

430 DEATH OF AUGUSTINE DURING THE SIEGE OF HIPPO

431 BONIFACIUS DEFEATED BY THE VANDALS AT HIPPO

438 THEODOSIAN CODE

439 VANDALS UNDER GEISERIC CONQUER CARTHAGE AND AFRICA; VANDAL KINGDOM FOUNDED IN NORTH AFRICA

VICTOR VITENSIS WRITES HIS ACCOUNT OF THE VANDAL INVASION

WRITINGS OF QUODVULTDEUS

### 450-457 MARCIAN

455 THE VANDALS OCCUPY TRIPOLITANIA

### 457-474 LEO I

467 BIRTH OF FULGENTIUS OF RUSPE

468 BASILISCUS TRIES TO RECONQUER AFRICA, GEISERIC ELUDES HIM

### 474 LEO II

### 475-476 ROMULUS AUGUSTULUS (WEST)

### 474-475 ZENO

### 475 BASILISCUS

### 476-491 ZENO (AGAIN)

476 END OF THE ROMAN EMPIRE IN THE WEST; ALL OF NORTH AFRICA IN HANDS OF THE VANDALS

477 DEATH OF GEISERIC - HUNERIC (477-484) HIS SON RULES - MARRIES EUDOCIA, DAUGHTER OF VALENTINIAN - SYMPATHIES CATHOLIC

484 AFRICAN COUNCIL (ARIAN) CONVENED BY HUNERIC, KING OF THE VANDALS. REPRESENTATIVES SENT BY 474 SEES; BISHOPS DEPRIVED OF POSSESSIONS, EXCOMMUNICATED AND EXILED

484-496 GUNTHAMUND RULES IN AFRICA

### 491-518 ANASTASIUS

493 *TABLETTES ALBERTINI* WRITTEN

496-523 THRASAMUND RULES IN AFRICA; MARRIES AMALAFRIDA, DAUGHTER OF THE OSTROGOTH THEODORIC



## **493-526 THEODORIC THE GREAT (WEST)**

502 FULGENTIUS IS CONSECRATED BISHOP OF RUSPE

## **518-527 JUSTIN I**

523 LEPCIS MAGNA ATTACKED BY THE BERBER LEUATHAE - SACKED AND ABANDONED BY ALL

524 - 530 VANDAL KING HILDERIC FAVOURS CATHOLICS. HIS MOTHER WAS CATHOLIC, THE DAUGHTER OF VALENTINIAN III IN THE WEST, WHICH MAY ACCOUNT FOR THIS  
RECALLS BISHOPS AND RECOGNISES BONIFACIUS AS PRIMATE OF AFRICA  
HILDERIC DEPOSED IN 530

525 BONIFACIUS CALLS FOR A COUNCIL AT CARTHAGE

## **527-565 JUSTINIAN I (WIFE THEODORA)**

527 DEATH OF FULGENTIUS OF RUSPE

529 JUSTINIAN ORDERS THE CLOSURE OF THE ACADEMY AT ATHENS

530-534 GELIMER RULES IN AFRICA UNTIL HIS DEFEAT BY BELISARIUS

532-7 SAINT SOPHIA BUILT

532 OEA REBELS AGAINST THE VANDALS WITH THE AID OF BYZANTINE TROOPS

533 BELISARIUS, BYZANTINE GENERAL, DEFEATS VANDAL ARMY UNDER GELIMER; RESTORATION OF CATHOLIC SUPREMACY, BUT WARS WITH THE BERBERS UNTIL 548

PROCOPIUS ACTIVE

CORIPPUS ACTIVE

AETIUS OF AMIDA COURT PHYSICIAN

534 SOLOMON SUCCEEDS BELISARIUS AS GENERAL. CHASES VANDALS FROM AFRICA; RECONQUERS ITALY AND AFRICA. REORGANIZATION OF THE FRONTIER DEFENCES; LEPCIS MAGNA REBUILT  
JUSTINIAN FORCES CHRISTIANITY ON THE PAGAN TRIBES IN THE SYRTIS AND AT AUGILA; FORTRESSES BUILT OR RESTORED IN TRIPOLITANIA AND MARMARICA

534 BONIFACIUS CALLS FOR A COUNCIL TO DISCUSS RECEPTION OF ARIANS WHO HAD BECOME ORTHODOX

535 THAMUGAS DESTROYED BY THE MAURI

THE *DIGEST* OF ROMAN LAW COMPILED

539 SOLOMON BUILDS FORTIFICATIONS BUT FLATTENS ROMAN BUILDINGS

543 MASSACRE AT LEPCIS MAGNA OF ELDERS OF LOUATA TRIBE BY SERGIUS, DUKE OF TRIPOLITANIA AND NEPHEW OF SOLOMON; GENERAL INSURRECTION OF THE TRIBES. DEATH OF SOLOMON IN BATTLE NEAR THEVESTE. CIVIL WAR BREAKS OUT.

544 BEGINNING OF THE CONTROVERSIAL THREE CHAPTERS POLICY INTRODUCED BY JUSTINIAN

546 JOHN TROGLITA APPOINTED *COMES AFRICAE*. AFTER TWO YEARS OF FIGHTING, PEACE FOR 15 YEARS

548 DEATH OF THEODORA

560 VIOLENT EARTHQUAKE IN AFRICA

563 NEW GOVERNOR MURDERS MAIN ALLY OF THE BYZANTINES. NEW UPRISING AND INTERMITTENT WARFARE UNTIL END OF CENTURY

## **565-578 JUSTIN II**

570 BIRTH OF MOHAMMED

## **578-582 TIBERIUS I CONSTANTINE**

## **582-602 MAURICE**

595 HERACLIUS, LEADING GENERAL OF THE EMPEROR MAURICE, BECOMES EXARCH (GOVERNOR) OF CARTHAGE

602 MAURICE MURDERED BY PHOCAS; **602-610 PHOCAS**

HERACLIUS OVERTHROWS PHOCAS AND HIS SON, HERACLIUS THE YOUNGER, BECOMES EMPEROR

## **610-641 HERACLIUS I**

632 DEATH OF MOHAMMED AT MEDINA

633-651/2 ARAB CONQUEST OF SYRIA, EGYPT AND THE SASSANID EMPIRE

## **641 CONSTANTINE III & HERACLONAS**

## **641-668 CONSTANS II**

642 ARABS CONQUER CYRENAICA



*Main Events and Trends Affecting Roman Africa*

643	ARABS BESIEGE TRIPOLI AND DESTROY SABRATHA	
646	NORTH AFRICA OVERRUN BY ARABS	
647	GREGORIUS, EXARCH (GOVERNOR) OF AFRICA DECLARES HIMSELF INDEPENDENT OF CONSTANTINOPLE, RESISTS THE ARABS; DEFEATED NEAR TRIPOLI. HIS CAPITAL, SUFETULA, FALLS INTO THE HANDS OF THE ARABS	<b>668-685 CONSTANTINE IV</b>
669	CAMPAIGN OF OKBA, WHO SEIZES TRIPOLITANIA AND BYZACENA	<b>685-695 JUSTINIAN II</b>
695	INVASION OF CARTHAGE BY HASSAN; RESISTANCE OF AL-KAHENA = QUEEN KAHINA (QUEEN OF THE AURÈS)	<b>695-698 LEONTIUS</b> <b>698-705 TIBERIUS II</b>
703	QUEEN KAHINA RESISTS THE ARABS AND DEFEATS THEM NEAR THAMUGADI	
705	KAHINA ENTRENCHES HER ARMY IN THE AMPHITHEATRE AT THYSDRUS KAHINA DEFEATED IN BATTLE AGAINST HASSAN AT FOOT OF THE AURÈS MOUNTAINS	<b>705-711 JUSTINIAN II AGAIN</b>
708	SEPTEM (CEUTA), LAST BYZANTINE OUTPOST, FALLS TO THE ARABS	
709/710	COMPLETION OF THE ARAB CONQUEST OF NORTH AFRICA	<b>711-713 PHILIPPICUS</b>





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